

2023

# Performance Writing, Objects and Millennial Precarity: A co-authored PaR exploration between friends

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<https://pearl.plymouth.ac.uk/handle/10026.1/21764>

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/5115>

University of Plymouth

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# UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

**PERFORMANCE WRITING, OBJECTS and MILLENNIAL  
PRECARITY:  
A co-authored PaR exploration between friends**

by

**KATHERYN OWENS AND CHRIS GREEN**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
in partial fulfilment for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**School of Art, Design, and Architecture.**

**October 2022**

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the following for their support, love and help throughout the PhD process: Ella Bean, Dominic Bilton, Callum Graham, Judith Green, Susan and Stuart Owens, Natalie Raven, Beth Richards, Youngshin Yang.

We are especially grateful to our supervisors, who have been generous, supportive, and patient, without whom we would have never gotten to this point: Roberta Mock, Victor Ladron De Guevara, Lee Miller, and John Matthews. We couldn't have asked for a better team. We would also like to thank Sharon Kivland for her guidance and support at the very early stages of the research project and for making us determined to stick with the collaborative approach.

This research has been inspired by the many people we have worked with in our insecure employment, hospitality jobs, and who we have shared houses with.



## Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy have either author *Katheryn Owens* or *Chris Green* been registered for any other University award without the prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee. Work submitted for this research degree has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at any other institution.

### **Public Sharing of Practice Research:**

2021, *Desires for Labour*, Zines distributed through The Good Press, Glasgow.

September 2019, *TaPRA Practice-as-Research Gallery*, Exeter. (Group show).

June 2018, *Artist's Jamboree*, organised by Low Profile.

June 2017, *On the Moors*, Plymouth University. (PGR practice sharing weekend).

February - March 2016, *Alternative Document*, Lincoln University. (Group show).

### **Published Writing:**

Owens, K. & Green, C. (2022) 'Walks for When You Need a Friend', *The Walkbook: Recipes for Walking and Wellbeing*. Available at: <https://walkcreate.gla.ac.uk/the-walkbook>

Owens, K. & Green, C. (2021) 'Creamy Garlic Mushrooms', *Recipes Under Confinement*, Sharon Kivland (Eds), pp 81-82.

Owens, K. & Green, C. (2020) 'Performing Millennial Housing Precarity', *Studies in Theatre and Performance* Volume 40. No 1. pp 44-53.

Owens, K. & Green, C. (2019) 'The Image of The Ghost', *Performance Research*. Volume 24. No 7. pp 156-160.

***Presentations at Conferences and Symposia:***

February 2022, 'Performing Millennial Precarity Through / As Performance Writing', Hopeful Positions, or: Playing in Precarity, FOOT 30, University of Toronto, Canada.

January 2022, 'Critical Studies in Education Symposium', University of East Anglia (Invited Speakers)

December 2021, 'Contemporary Themes in Walking Art in the UK and Canada', Panel Discussion, University of Regina, Canada (Invited Speakers).

November 2021, 'Housebox and Meal project', Covid-19 and Home: Dwelling and belonging in pandemic times, Museum of the Home, London

September 2019, 'I'm Dead! Russian Doll, Trauma and Friendship'. TaPRA Annual Conference, University of Exeter.

August 2018, 'On Stalling', Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference, University of Cardiff.

September 2017, 'Performative Walk towards Korea', TaPRA Annual Conference, University of Salford.

July 2016, '24 Hours Spent Together in Silence', How to Do Things With... University of Surrey.

February 2016 'Collaboration as Archive', Alternative Document Conference, Lincoln University.

Word Count: 97,109

Appendix: 4575

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Owens'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. To the left of the main signature, there is a smaller, less legible scribble.

Date: 31st October 2022.

**Katheryn Owens and Chris Green**  
**Performance Writing, Objects and Millennial Precarity: A co-authored PaR exploration between friends.**

**Abstract**

This practice-as-research project uses performance writing to understand, illustrate and work through aspects of millennial experience, with a specific interest in precarious housing and labour. For us, experiencing precarity means that fundamental aspects of what is required to experience what Lauren Berlant calls 'a good life' (including secure working contracts, renters' rights, access to leisure time) are not being met. This leads to a feeling of 'living on the edge' (Ahmed, 2017: 238), which in turn prevents us from being able to imagine alternatives. This performance writing takes the form of scores, instructions, maps, walking, knitting, zines, and audio recordings. We submit four artworks to be examined alongside the written element of the thesis, which is constructed around their analysis: *House Box* (2017), *Desires for Labour* (2019), *Chapel Street or Wherever you Are* (2021) and *Recipe Book* (2021).

Performance writing is here understood as theorised by academics such as Caroline Bergvall and Ric Allsopp whereby a consideration of text includes visual, physical, aural, and performative elements and there are no fixed boundaries between performance and writing. Instead, there is a 'continuing and transforming relationship between the two terms' (Allsopp, 1999: 77). This thesis seeks to develop and offers a more refined definition of performance writing. Our approach to performance writing emphasises embodied action, affect and experience in its production and its encounter. As such, we frame Barthes' literary theories of readerly and writerly text

through the lens of performance studies. We demonstrate through our practice how performance writing undergoes a continuous process of rewriting through its encounter. Particular focus is placed upon the production of performance writing objects, and this is demonstrated through the range of ways that performance writing has been produced. Through this, we argue that performance writing can offer hopeful strategies to reimagine the future through the political potential of friendship. Whilst performance writing might not result in the means to *plan* for the future, its relationship to imagination may lay the groundwork for this and is presented as a *potential*. Due to the collaborative nature of this research project, this PhD offers insights into co-authored meaning-making in the performing and visual arts, in addition to establishing the value of performance writing objects within the context of millennial precarity.

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## Introduction

This thesis is concerned with millennial precarity, and the inability to plan for the future due to a lack of security; how this is experienced, and how it is managed. It is informed by our shared economic position, as well as through friendship and social networks. It takes collaboration as a central concern; that knowledge is produced collaboratively, that performance is understood collaboratively, and that the solution to precarity is to move away from individualism and towards collaborative ideas of care. All aspects of our research, both practice and writing, are co-authored. We are close friends and, as such, the collaborative nature of friendship is reflected on. We define our practice as performance writing, whereby both performance and writing are brought together to challenge the disciplinary boundaries of themselves and of each other. This is especially useful for this inquiry into precarity because it allows for a range of practices and approaches to be utilised and means that new distinctions can be articulated. As a part of the thesis, we present four pieces of performance writing practice; *House Box*, *Desires for Labour*, *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* and *Recipe Book*. This practice forms the basis of our inquiry and forms the subject of our chapters. Examiners will receive a copy of each object except for the case of the *House Box* where we ask that the box be sent on and the banner for *Desires for Labour* that we will have available to experience at the time of the viva examination.

In this thesis, performance writing is utilised for its ability to act as a means of interrogating socio-political issues that extends beyond art making to include broader political and economic concerns. As Ric Allsopp notes, ‘the pervasiveness of the terms of “performance” as a means of reading diverse cultural practices have

provided a rich ground for the emergence of performance writing as a practice and as a way of framing practice' (1999: 77). The field of performance writing is not simply predicated on finding similarities in practice between performance and writing, but rather brings into question diverse works through the medium of language and writing. As Caroline Bergvall further attests: 'writing's link with language inevitably forces the appraisal of writing as it grapples with the psycho-social and political dimensions of any collective language' (1996: 7). Performance writing, therefore, is both a way of understanding culture and politics and a way of expressing culture and politics. In our own research practice, we are exploring the political and psycho-social aspects of the millennial experience and performance writing offers us a way of understanding and articulating these experiences. This in part is due to the unfixed precarious nature of performance writing; this allows us to make things that exist in parts, but that can be picked up and reconstructed at different moments and by different people. The performance writing we have created is both about our experiences of millennial precarity and is a product of that precarity. It also allows us the opportunity to create many different 'kinds' of performance writing, each reflecting a different millennial experience.

We began this research project living together with four others in a shared house and conducted experiments as a way of exploring what the collaboration might be – such as following each other, swapping rooms, and being in silence together. These were not so much about the themes of the research as about how we interact and work together. However, as these experiments took place between us only, we used a range of performance writing experiments and approaches including writing performance scores as a way of sharing what had happened. In this thesis, we link

our socio-economic position, and are clear that our personal experiences as millennials means that we occupy privileged positions. As such, we do not attempt to address other forms of precarity (such as, homelessness, health). Millennial is the name given to the generation of those born between (roughly) 1982-2000 (Reuters, 2017). The generation is often mocked and called lazy, however their parents may have benefited from low property prices and other opportunities to gain access to secure housing (the right to buy policy, for example), and a healthy job market. Millennials have come of age during a financial crisis in 2008 and declining economic conditions including unaffordable property prices and rents (in Chapter One of this thesis we offer a detailed analysis of millennial precarity). Precarity refers to the lack of means to plan for the future, illustrated by this example referring to UK working age adults where ‘nearly half spend their entire monthly income on living costs, according to a recent study by Deloitte, while two in five have taken on extra work to make ends meet’ (Abdul, 2022). Millennial precarity is the term we devised through bringing together these terms; together they refer to the experience of the millennial generation in trying to survive under precarious working conditions and a hostile housing market.<sup>1</sup>

Our understanding of millennials is from a UK perspective, largely city-based, and is informed by having had peripatetic adulthoods within the UK so far (having both moved several times for accessing educational opportunities). We were both raised lower middle class and had secure housing growing up that our parents had mortgages for. We have both had opportunities to extensively pursue educational

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst there are source materials that refer to the millennial generation as living precariously (which are cited where appropriate in this thesis), we have not found sources using the phrase ‘millennial precarity’ to describe this generational experience as used in this thesis.

interests. We were raised secularly and have not experienced cultural or religious based oppression, are both white and have not experienced racism, and whilst individually we have experienced degrees of sexual orientation based and / or gender based and / or illness based precarity or discrimination we do not refer to these directly in this thesis as they have not defined our experience of economic precarity.

**Research Aims:**

- 1) To develop a method of performance writing that situates and interrogates our experience of millennial precarity.
- 2) To define the use value of performance writing within this interrogation.
- 3) To analyse hope and friendship in millennial precarity.

**Research Questions:**

- 1) How might performance writing strategies interrogate a specific cultural, social and economic position?
- 2) How does our autoethnographic process develop performance writing, and in what ways may this be useful for other artists?

In the methodology section of this introduction, we will be detailing our approach to the research aims and questions. These questions and aims come out of and are connected to the literature review. They are also connected to the fields that we are identifying below; they draw on some of the key themes and issues that come about from the analyses of literature that is about art making, precarity, and labour. The

key words that appear in the aims and questions relate to existing research, discussed in the following section.

### ***The Research Enquiry and Existing Scholarship***

This thesis is concerned with friendship, as both a collaborative method, and as part of the experience of millennial precarity. Friendship has been written about as an ethnographic methodology within anthropology. Ethnography is a qualitative form of study that uses participants as subjects in an attempt to incorporate the perspective of the subject of the study. Lisa M. Tillmann-Healy wrote the influential essay 'Friendship as Method' (2003), where she proposes the four aspects of friendship as method as offering a depth of enquiry afforded through friendship (where the researcher is involved in sustained ways beyond an observer); being conducted at the pace of the friendship, rather than within a specific predetermined time frame; research is situated within 'the natural contexts of friendship', including in public and private spaces; and that an 'ethics of friendship' is prioritised, which she describes as 'a stance of hope, caring, justice, even love. Friendship as method is neither a program nor a guise strategically aimed at gaining further access. It is a level of investment in participants' lives that puts fieldwork relationships on par with the project' (2003: 735).

Whist Tillmann-Healy reflects on the intimacies that have occurred through using this approach, and describes the friendships forged as meaningful and real, the paper still implies that as a qualitative ethnographic approach the research looks outwards: at its subjects rather than at the researcher. Our own use of friendship within our approach differs in that we take an *autoethnographic* approach (which we elaborate

on later in this introduction) and are reflecting on the relationships we share with each other (and our other friendships).

Tillmann-Healy's paper has been used in other studies on friendship and ethnography, including 'Close but not too close: friendship as method(ology) in ethnographic research encounters' (Owton, H. and Allen-Collinson J, 2013), where the authors make reference to the subject-researcher relationship being between those who are already friends. In the paper 'Noura And Me: Friendship As Method' In Times Of Crisis' (2015) Marina de Regt evaluates some of the difficulties of this approach, in relation to financial entanglements. In the paper 'Friendship as method: reflections on a new approach to understanding student experiences in higher education' (2019) Emma Heron raises a limitation of Tillman-Healy's approach as being between subject and researcher and discusses the lack of focus on friendship *between participants* as a mode of research. Liria de la Cruz and Paloma Gay y Blasco push friendship as method further still, writing together as researcher and subject in 'Friendship, anthropology' (2011). They reflect on how they influence one another within the research in an attempt 'to challenge divisions that have been fundamental to anthropology since its beginnings' (2012).

Other aspects of scholarly research and friendship move away from ethnographic models to reflecting on friendship as a means of managing precarious experiences, including Catherine Oliver & Amelia Morris. Their paper 'Resisting the "academic circle jerk": precarity and friendship at academic conferences in UK higher education' (2022) describes how friendship helped the authors manage the experience of being at academic conferences as precarious researchers, which resonates with our own



experiences. We reflect on how friendship helps us manage precarious experiences throughout the thesis.

Johanna Billing, Maria Lind, and Lars Nilsson note that 'collaboration becomes an umbrella term for the diverse working methods that require more than one participant' (Lind, 2007: 17). The essays in *Collaboration in Performance Practice: Premises, Workings and Failures* (2016) edited by Noyale Colin and Stefanie Sachsenmaier, offer a broad range of perspectives and approaches to collaboration within performance practice. Colin's chapter titled 'Collaboration as a Form of Labour' is of particular relevance to our approach, as they talk about the relationship between performance practice and immaterial labour, as well as discussing the importance of friendship in relation to this. The sociologist Howard Becker has written about the role of collaboration in art making, stating that 'art works do not result from the activity of a single artist, but from the coordinated work of a network of cooperating specialists' (Becker, no date). Much of the research around collaboration is concerned with social and community-based practice. The art historian Grant Kester has written about this in relation to socially engaged art practices (2011). Other writers who have written about collaborative practices through this lens include Claire Bishop (2012), and the artist Pablo Helguera (2011) who offers strategies for collaborative art making with communities. In Chapter Seven we refer to the artist Suzanne Lacy who works with communities (in relation to food as a shared practice), and the art writer Nicolas Bourriard's theory of relational aesthetics, with reference to Rikrit Tiravanija's curated shared meals. This thesis brings together collaborative arts practice and collaborative research.

Precariousness is experienced in different ways by different communities and individuals. In 'Living Precarious Lives? Time and Temporality in Visual Arts Careers' (2020), Paula Serafini & Mark Banks write about temporal aspects of art making and precarity, noting that social differences impact the experience of precarity, with one marked difference being the time available to make artworks (2020: 352). We refer to examples of precarity research in the literature review that follows this section, including discussion of issues with funding in relation to art making, the impact of making performance in precarious times, and ways the circumstances of precarity might be used in generating performance.

In *Hope in The Dark* (2016) Rebecca Solnit explores optimism during times of political and social pessimism, in which she argues that small acts of resistance can be a step towards change. Within psychology, Erikson (1995) has articulated hope as a key virtue of childhood development. The psychologist Charles Snyder (2002) developed a 'hope theory' that was made up of three key components – goals, pathways, and agency, believing that adopting a goal-oriented mindset would offer a way to develop yourself. The Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch (1995) developed a principle of hope in a book of the same title in which he explores the possibilities of a utopian reality. The book is published in three volumes (originally published 1954, 1955 & 1959): the first introduces a concept of the not-yet conscious, the second outlines a better world and the third details how humans might reach this better world.

Pew Research Center offers research on defining different generations, and extensive research on factors shaping the millennial experience (2023). Whilst this

organisation is based in the USA, some of the research relates to a global neoliberal context and translates to a UK experience. Angela McRobbie writes about feminism and youth culture in relation to 2000's consumerist and body image trends (2009). Other research concerning this generation looks at education and cultural spaces (Sandeem, 2008) and rising awareness of intersectional issues (Council, Johnson, and Yazdiha, 2020). The literature review also offers contemporary examples concerned with 'millennial' and performance making.

### ***Literature Review***

The focus of the following literature review draws on scholarship from both performance and contemporary art practices. In doing so, we aim to highlight the literature that is already available, identify other art works that speak to our own, and to understand the areas of knowledge that our research can contribute to. As becomes clear through this review, precarity is taken to mean several things related to an uncertainty around living. This includes precarity as relating to general economic and social hardship (and art practices that demonstrate or attempt to work towards rectifying this), and precarity in relation to a performance ecology of limited funding streams and institutional support whereby it is increasingly difficult to make a living as an artist. There is also a distinction evident between works of art that are produced under precarious conditions, works that attempt to use performance as a means of dealing with precarity (social practice) and work that is *about* precarity; we touch upon each here. We have yet to find any sources that discuss how performance writing might be used as a way of presenting precarity or as a means of finding strategies to deal with precarity. Chapter Two of this thesis offers a detailed

practice review into performance writing, which sits separate (but in conjunction) from this literature review of art and precarity.

Maddy Costa and Andy Field's book, *Performance in an Age of Precarity: 40 Reflections* (2021), offers a series of short essays on different performances in a UK context, the majority of which were made post the 2008 financial crash, which led to a global recession (Merle, 2018) and then economic governmental policies commonly referred to as 'austerity' (Elliott, 2023). Significantly this saw a cut in social welfare in the UK (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The book frames precarity slightly differently to how we have in this thesis. Whilst we have made our practice both through using our experience of precarity and in response to it, not all the performances described in the book are *about* precarity. Instead, some are framed as precarious because they are made in a climate of increasing cuts to the arts, and the premise of the book is described as telling 'a story of art-making in the age of austerity and everything that socio-economic crisis has entailed' (Costa and Field, 2021: 2). Performances are described as difficult to make because of a variety of precarious factors, including physical distance between collaborators, artists existing outside of major theatrical institutions and so not having the financial insulation that such institutions may provide, economically precarious factors such as Brexit, the threat of violence due to racism (the experiences of Black artists in particular), and to violence that queer artists face. Another difference between the theme of this book and our own work is that the reflections are offered in response to live work, and our performance writing practice does not happen in front of an audience in the same way. The performance writing texts are what is engaged with our work, and these can be activated and performed by those who interact with them (for example, this

might be the performing of a score). By live work, we mean that which is framed as a performance and unfolds in front of an audience. In Chapter Two we offer detailed definitions of performance and live performance for us to strengthen a definition for what performance writing is.

There are several performances discussed by Costa and Field that directly respond to aspects of socio-economic precarity. *Uninvited Guests' Make Better Please* (2010 - 2013) uses the newspapers from the day of the performance to create a participatory work in which the audience selects news stories and headlines to be incorporated into the show. Whilst this part of the performance is staged as a social meeting, the method of approaching textual material is used as a method for generating performance writing. Because the news is often about the government and written in a climate of austerity and precarity, these themes inevitably are an aspect of the performance. Costa describes *Uninvited Guests'* performance as knowing 'it won't actually change the world, but it might just help people imagine that change, and feel that the times are more liveable as a result' (Costa, 2021: 32). The idea of finding ways to imagine change especially when change feels unimaginable because of years of austerity policies brought in by right-wing leaning governments, the impact of Brexit and the lack of a viable alternative political party is central to the performance writing in this thesis. Costa suggests that this imagining of change is an important step here, within which is a potential, which resonates with our research in that the ability to imagine a different future might not itself result in the means to plan for a different future, but it is an important starting point.

Costa's response to Rachel Mars' performances draw on Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism* (2009). She argues that 'a culture that measures human value through economic activity isn't one that will be sympathetic when the sense of worthlessness this induces leads to [...] "breakdown in functionality"' (Costa, 2021: 100). This sentiment provides context for understanding Mars' performance *Sing It! Spirit of Envy*<sup>2</sup> that utilises collected responses about how people perceive inequality, or what people are envious of. Rather than existing as text to be read, the responses are performed by a choir. The singing lends something comical to lines, and the collective experience of being in the audience brings attention to certain lines (for example, the David Cameron quote 'we are all in this together' is repeated). *Sing It! Spirit of Envy* is not rooted in millennial experience, and not all responses refer to experiences specifically related to economic precarity. However, as the responses exist within an economically capitalist context, the performance lends itself to being read through a lens of precarity. This is in part because the performance included soundbites of Conservative party politicians that envy and greed are economically 'good'<sup>3</sup>, and in part because a culture of economic competition means for some to have more, many will be living precariously with less. There are lines that share sentiments with feelings described in our analysis of our performance writing and definition of precarity, in particular 'Things that I should have at my age', 'Income and the marriage and kids', 'People who can pay all their rent'. Whilst we do not discuss marriage and raising families in this thesis, we do discuss the sense of loss of a projected future, which is predicated on the precarity we experience now.

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<sup>2</sup> Since 2014, available to view at <http://www.rachelmars.org/sing-it-spirit-of-envy>

<sup>3</sup> In a 2013 speech Boris Johnson declared that greed is a 'valuable spur to economic activity' (Watt, 2013).

We have identified a number of publications that focus upon the relationship between labour and contemporary art. Labour forms only one part of our exploration of the millennial experience in this thesis, however this is a rich area of research. Recent titles include Bojana Kunst's *Artist at Work, Proximity of Art and Capitalism* (2015) in which the author argues that in order to consider the way art may be understood there needs to be more attention paid to the relationship of the artist's life as a worker and to capitalism. Dave Beech's *Art and Postcapitalism: Aesthetic Labour, Automation and Value Production* (2019) offers a more hopeful position of what the role of art might be in re-imagining a post capitalist world. The book begins by suggesting the ways in which the 'artist' has become entangled with the capitalist model, and then suggests ways that art can be used to resist these structures. Along a similar line the chapters in *Living Labor* (2013) by Julia Bryan-Wilson, Carl Cederström, Peter Fleming, Annette Kamp and Kathi Weeks propose forms of resistance and refusal and suggest modalities of a post-work future. Examples in this book include Olivia Plender's *Self-direction Lounge* (2013) which the artist describes as 'a play on contemporary working environments and the language of workplace psychology. Several themed areas (or zones) are divided by screens, so the office becomes a stage or set, in which performance can be measured' (Plender, 2013).<sup>4</sup>

Danielle Child's book, *Working Aesthetics Labour, Art and Capitalism* (2019), draws on Marx and Engels in order to provide a contextual frame for the analysis of a range of contemporary works. Within this thesis we understand aesthetics as being

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<sup>4</sup> The work is similar to ours in the way that it critiques working environments – we analyse our work on labour in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis.

connected to the philosophy and study of art (and artistic practices) and we do not limit aesthetics to questions around taste and beauty, Child explains that:

what I term here “working aesthetics”, proposing an alternative reading of art to the Western tradition of aesthetics that concentrated on ideas surrounding the beautiful, medium-specificity and, ultimately taste in art. These philosophical ideas contributed to the narrowing and mystification of what constitutes an artist and, by association, artistic labour. (2019: 3).

We understand aesthetics through this definition and find connections between the description of working aesthetics and our own use of the term. The book is split into sections; each section follows a particular form of labour (for example, immaterial, affective, digital). In the introduction, Child raises an important point about the production of art and the conditions from which it is produced, noting that ‘to view the production of works of art in isolation from these conditions would be to make false assumptions about the nature of art, enhancing the bourgeois myth that art is created in isolation from the outside world’ (Child, 2019: 8). For us, this statement cannot be overstated; we position both the conditions our work is made in and the work itself as precarious – they cannot be separated from each other. In Child’s chapter on immaterial labour, there is a deep analysis of Rimini Protokoll’s *Call Cutta in a Box* (2008-2012), a phone theatre performance in which the audience member is called by a worker-actor from a call centre in Kolkata, India. The premise is based upon an intimate phone call taking place between them, playing with the phenomenon of call-centre workers trying to sell you something. The performance takes place across two locations; the call centre workers are in India and the audience wherever the performance is being held (a city street, office building, hotel). The worker-actors are employed to play the role of worker, and as such the distinctions between art and life become ever more blurred. As Child notes, ‘[t]he play engages with real working people under real conditions and this entanglement



makes it a complex work... *Call Cutta*... is not as easily exposed as creating false relations' (2019: 111).

In 2013, Zoran Erić and Stevan Vuković co-edited an issue of *On Curating.org* titled 'Precarious labour in the field of art'. Although the focus of the journal is on curating contemporary art, many of the issues that are raised are relevant to our research project. Anthony Davis' paper offers a critique of 'progressive institutions' beginning with an anecdote about the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona's (MACBA) conference on the legacy of institutional critique. What becomes clear is the entanglement of precarity, institutions, and the resistance to this. Carrotworkers Collective article is a creative response titled 'On Free Labour'; they describe their desires for better labour conditions, and images of Precarious Workers Brigade 'Bust Your Boss' cards, that resemble the work we discuss in Chapter Five of this thesis. Free Art Collective's text 'When Work is More Than Wages' highlights the important statement, 'precarity is not linked to a specific type of employment but manifests itself through an insecurity whereby one is at the mercy of others, always having to beg, network and compete to be able to pursue one's labour and life. Precarity is the paradoxical state of being both overworked and insecure at once, regardless of being employed or not' (Freee, 2013: 42).

Dr Faith Taylor's PhD project involved conducting interviews with millennials in rented accommodation, titled *Love in The Time Of Precarity: Reproduction and Intimacy among Millennials in Hackney* (2016-2019). Her project focuses on a different UK region to our project, as we are based in South Manchester, and the cost of renting in Hackney is higher than where we are based. Taylor translated

some of the interviews as illustrated cartoon strips, made available via her website [www.loveinthetimeofprecarity.wordpress.com](http://www.loveinthetimeofprecarity.wordpress.com), to make the research more accessible to those outside of academia (Taylor, 2019). Taylor's findings presented in both the interviews and the cartoons resonate with the position taken in this thesis: 'the topic of what 'used to be possible' in terms of planning a future – and what was now obstructed – emerged unprompted in the testimonies of people with often very disparate lives. Another thing stood out: the varied experiences of precarity had significant implications for people's relationships in the present' (Taylor, 2019).

The 2020 special issue of *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, on 'Housing, Performance and Activism' provides some context for the definition of housing precarity used in this thesis. Katie Beswick's introduction explains that the articles offer 'local articulations of the global housing crisis' and consequently ask 'what can performance do for housing activism' (Beswick, 2020: 2-3). Chapter One of this thesis was published in this special issue of *Studies in Theatre and Performance* and offers an interpretation of housing precarity rooted in a rented house shared with a group of millennials. Rebecca Hillman's article concerns a 2011 performance *The Pact* that took place in a disused pub in Reading (UK). This performance drew on community organising strategies and welcomed residents into the devising process, gathering responses about the effects of austerity.

Referencing several activism sources, Hillman's essay theorises that agency is 'achieved through the commitment of new activists to one another' and that the social aspect of theatre-making lends itself to this as it 'is reliant on intensive collective work as well as autonomous decision-making from people with a range of

skills. It is also conducive to the formation of close relationships between participants' (Hillman, 2020: 105). The type of performance making discussed as research in this thesis differs greatly from both the devising process described by Hillman as well as the staging of the performance made. However, it shares with *The Pact* a concern that housing precarity 'was not an extension of the recession, but the result of deliberate government policy to accelerate the reduction of the stock and subsidy of social housing, and further reduce regulation of the private-rented sector' (Hillman, 2020: 100). Hillman writes about the social relations of both socially engaged devised theatre and community organising in the article and the potential for this for ongoing processes of change. Our work shares here a concern with ways of imagining change, albeit with a different approach to collaborative activism.

Nicholas Ridout's and Rebecca Schneider's introduction to an issue of *The Drama Review* entitled "Precarity and Performance" asks '[h]ow do we pay attention to precarity — economic precarity, neoliberal precarity — through a close reading of the performing body?' (Ridout and Schneider, 2012: 6). Published in the wake of the Occupy protests<sup>5</sup>, the journal focuses on the labouring body in the context of neoliberal precarity, predominantly in North America and Europe. We share the sentiment offered here, that '[I]f precarity is life lived in relation to "someone else's hands", it is also newly experienced by many as life lived in relation to a future that cannot be propped securely upon the past' (Ridout and Schneider, 2012: 6).

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<sup>5</sup> The Occupy movement was a global protest movement that saw camps set up in major cities including New York, Oakland, and London, beginning with Occupy Wall Street on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011, with the remaining major camps being evicted by February 2012. The protests often used the phrase 'we are the 99%', to make reference to the inequality of wealth division. (Library of Congress, no date).

Shannon Jackson's essay in this issue of *The Drama Review* 'Just-in-Time, Performance and the Aesthetics of Precarity' draws on examples of the immaterial in theatre and performance in relation to late capitalist labour and offers a perspective on precarity through an analysis of the skills demonstrated in performance. Our practice of performance writing and the craft methods we use in physically making it, are discussed (in Chapters Four and Five) as a form of pleasure that acts in resistance to our experiences in our paid labour and capitalist precarity. Jackson discusses performance as producing something 'differently material' (Jackson, 2012: 19), and critiques the skills used in performance, as well as presenting arguments for and against theatre and performance as upholding or resisting capitalism. In our thesis, we focus less on specific skills used to make art or do research and more on the different types of affective labour (we return to labour in Chapters Four and Five) we perform in different types of jobs.

Critical Art Ensemble's (CAE) essay in this issue of *The Drama Review* particularly resonates with this PhD. In their essay, 'Reinventing Precarity', CAE offer strategies for bringing those experiencing precarity together to form new relations that might offer ways to resist the forces that bring about precarity. CAE position precarity as:

no more representative of life now than it has been at other moments in history or on other present day points on the globe (in fact it is probably less so), it has become a noisier part of the collective consciousness as traditionally secure economic and ethnic groups move closer to or into downward mobility (Critical Art Ensemble, 2012: 49-50).

Instead of arguing for a return to time before this unprecedented downward mobility, they propose to 'inspire a precarity that serves people and improves the social sphere, until it becomes possible for us to eliminate its negative aspects that function

as basic conditions of life' (Critical Art Ensemble, 2012: 51). They focus on the potential positive aspects of precarity (for example, precarious working contracts could benefit those who want flexibility),<sup>6</sup> illustrating this through their work at bringing protected endangered plant species into threatened social and green spaces. Whilst the 'public' space is not in itself protected, the protections offered to endangered plant species results in the public spaces becoming protected by proxy (Critical Art Ensemble, 2012: 57). They 'plan to place plants at risk and spaces at risk into alliances of precarity that benefit both' (Critical Art Ensemble, 2012: 57) Critical Art Ensemble also utilise Drifting, a method of walking developed by the Situationists, as a utopian process that helps the group develop their strategies for resisting or reimagining precarity, arguing that through drifting 'a situation, or even the entire social world, could be other than it is' (2012: 57). We employ similar strategies in Chapter Six, where we discuss our performance writing about Chapel Street in Salford, and the process of developing this work as a process of walking.

Some of the writing and performance discussed above relates to a millennial perspective because of the ages of the artists and years the work was made, but this is never specifically addressed as a millennial issue (and not all works are produced by 'millennials'), Instead these performances are about generic precarity and arise from the general social, economic, and political climate of the 2010s. The

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<sup>6</sup> However, we have found amongst ourselves and our peers that this has been misused by employers who choose to use it as a cost saving exercise, where secure contracts would be preferred. This is reflected across sectors that use precarious contracts. A 2017 critical review of the impact of Section 172(1)(b) of the Companies Act 2006 (referring to the director of a company having a duty to promote the success of the company) found that on such precarious contracts, 'most of the workers have a working life that is permanently on call, and they are uncertain as to what hours of work they may be offered in a week' (Ndzi, 2017). The lack of security in employment correlates to workers being unaware of their rights as employees. At times this means 'they will, therefore, lose out on all the employment rights such as the right not to be unfairly dismissed. The employers can take advantage of workers' ignorance to refuse the workers certain rights, to dismiss workers with or without notice, not provide redundancy pay etc.' (Ndzi, 2017).

performances we discuss in the literature review do not set out to understand the emotional experience of precarity in terms of imagined futures.

### ***Identifying the field(s)***

This research sits within three subfields of performance and contemporary art.

Firstly, it sits in performance writing and offers a contribution to further develop an understanding as to what performance writing can be, and what it can do. This work may benefit those who are analysing work by contemporary performance writers.

Examples include Jenny Holzer who makes large scale installations of LED lights of phrases and slogans. Ruth Beale and Amy Feneck (The Alternative School of Economics) who create banners and informational posters that reflect on socio-economic positions and neoliberalism. Kristen Kreider and James O'Leary (Kreider & O'Leary) who work at a crossover between poetry, art and architecture and create performance, installation, and video works. Tim Etchells who creates light works and other media using words. Some further examples of contemporary artists within this field include Aaron Williamson, Mel Jordan, Redell Olsen, Nathan Walker, Tony Cokes, Nick Thurston, Luis Camnitzer and Laurel Ptak. We offer a detailed exploration of the field of performance writing in the second chapter of this thesis including a literature review and examples of artistic practice that is associated.

Secondly, we also regard this work as within an object-oriented subfield of contemporary art. By this we mean that the role of the object within the artwork extends beyond itself and becomes a performance in some way. There have been a number of international symposium and conferences held on the subject of the relationship between both performance and poetry and objects. In 2010 Tate and the

Henry Moore Institute held a conference titled *Sculpture and Performance*, Tate have also produced a number of 'TateShots' videos on the subject including one titled *Can an Object be a Performance?* (2018). More recently, there has been a group exhibition titled *The Weight of Words* (2023) held at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds that explores the relationship between sculpture and poetry. Alongside this exhibition there has been a series of events titled *Sculpture and Poetry* including two conferences (2021 and 2022), as well as a series of learnings on the bodily, performance, material and media poetics. There is also a resources library that accompanies the website. We use objects within our performance writing as the means with which the text is engaged; we analyse the materiality of the text as an object.

We make reference to Pil and Galia Kollektiv a number of times throughout this thesis both because of their connections to collaboration and co-authorship, and because of their expertise in the area of object-oriented contemporary art. They have written and presented work on the performance of objects. The artist Trisha Baga's work consists of performance, video, installation and found objects. Her bookwork *The Eye, The Eye, and The Ear* (2021) is an exhibition catalogue and artist's book that uses Mary Shelley's classic novel *Frankenstein*. The first few pages are designed to look as though they have been ripped and that Baga's work is hiding behind it. The following pages are then comprised of text and images that document the practice. The book is designed to look as if it has been put together by hand, which is similar to our own work. We make direct reference to the artist Holly White's recipe book *Recipes for You* (2016) in Chapter Nine when we discuss our work *Recipe Book*. We highlight these artists because they are millennials and share what

we call 'millennial aesthetics'. A further object-oriented artist who we suggest as working within this millennial aesthetic is Tommy Smits. Other artists whose performances use everyday objects (such as chairs) include Vlatka Horvat, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Milles whose installation works use a mixture of audio and objects, Annabelle Frearson whose work combines texts and objects, Hannah Black who combines text, objects and performance, Slavs and Tatars, Heather Philipson and Mark Titchne are further examples.

Thirdly, this work sits within the subfield of performance that is concerned with site or score-based performance that might include pedestrian or walking practices. Some key examples of the kinds of artists we mean here are Dee Heddon, Misha Myers, Phil Smith, Claire Hind and Clare Qualmann who have all created work that triggers a response or is activated through creating an action by participants. For example, Clare Qualmann's *walkwalkwalk: an archaeology of the familiar and the forgotten* is a participatory walk activated through revisiting the everyday routes participants take, as a methodology for gathering objects, visual documentation and stories to create a narrative about the area and the people walking through it. Hayley Newman's sited novella *Common* (2013) and subsequent site-specific work titled *Histoire Econmique* (2013) which was a series of rubbings on the front of banks. Amy Sharrock's *Museum of Water* (2013-2023) is a collection of publicly donated water and the stories associated with it and related swimming works, Nando Messias's *A Sissy Progress* (2014-2015) which was a performance walk in response to being beaten up in a homophobic attack.

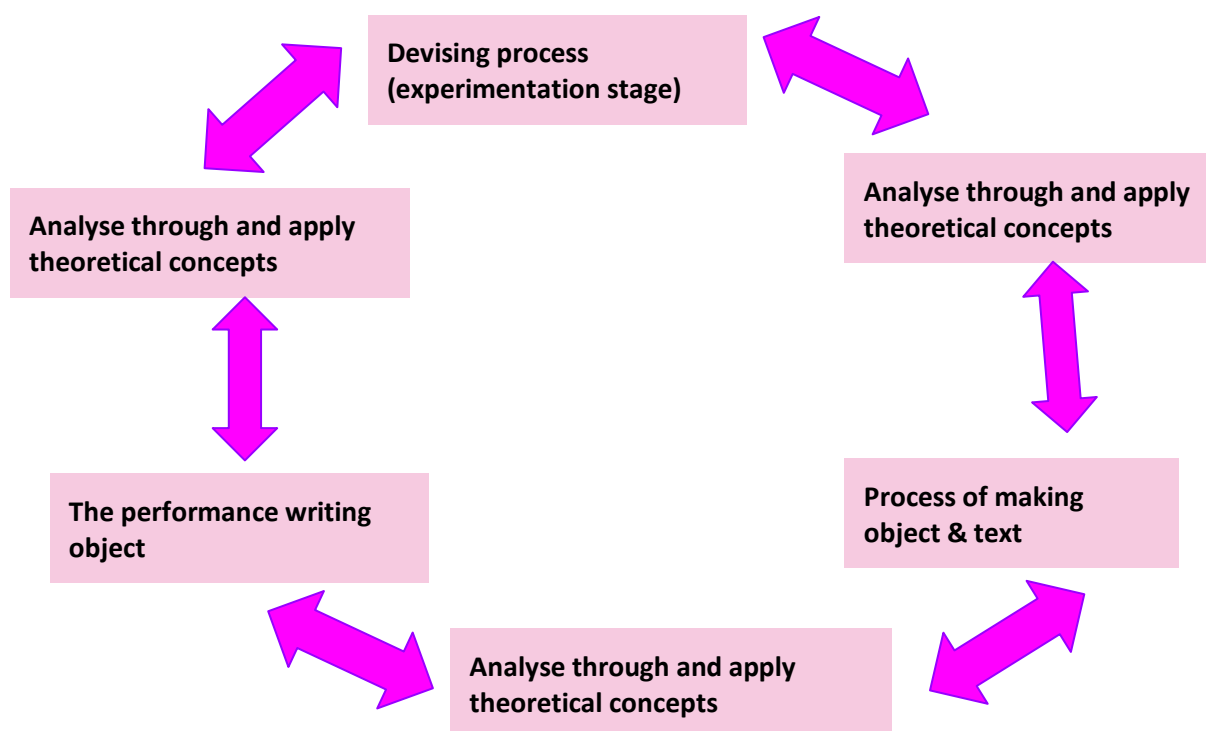


InSitu is the European platform (based in Marseille) for creating artistic practice in public spaces. They commission and support a range of artists who are working within the field to create work that engages with site; their current programme (2022-2024) is titled *(Un)common spaces*. Other similar initiatives, exhibitions and festivals include *Art in Odd Places* (NYC) which is a festival of site-based performance practices that respond to a specific location; *Clockshop* (Los Angeles), AIR Studio organised by artist Anna Hart (London); *WALKINGWOMEN* (2016), Somerset House (London); *Wanderlust* (2016), High Line (NYC); *Walking and thinking and Walking* (1996), Louisiana Museum (Copenhagen), *Odd Arts Festival* (Somerset) and *B-Side Festival* (Portland).

Some key publications, conferences, research projects and symposia include the *Walk Create* research project based at the University of Glasgow. The publication *fieldnotes* Journal, the book *'In comes I': Performance, Memory and Landscape* (Pearson, 2006), 'Framing the Drift and Drifting the Frame: Walking with Wrights & Sites' (Darby, 2013) 'Turning 40: 40 turns. Walking & friendship' (Heddon, 2012), 'Arts of Urban Exploration' (Pinder, 2005). Conferences and symposia include *Performing Scores / Scoring Performance* (Manchester, 2023), *Walking's New Movements* (Plymouth, 2019), *Sideways* (Belgium, 2012), *Drifting Bodies, Fluent Spaces* (Guimarães, 2020) and *Room to Room* (Huntly, 2012).

### ***Research Methodology: Practice-as-Research***

Theory and practice are inseparable in this thesis. We could not say which informs the other, instead they work cyclically, each informing the other in a way that deepens our understanding of both components.



**Figure 0.1: diagram demonstrating how practice and theory inform one another.**

This thesis demonstrates how practice informs theory by bringing together precarity and performance writing. It draws on both experiences of precarity and uses this in the practice, and theoretical concepts about or relating to precarity. It draws on theory about performance writing and our practice of performance writing. The diagram (Figure 0.1) shows the cyclical nature of our research methodology.

In this thesis, performance writing is both product and process *at the same time*. We ask how performance writing might offer a model for others to create their own artworks in relation to the way that they live their lives, and how they may wish to think differently about the current conditions they find themselves in. This project follows a practice-as-research methodology, whereby knowledge is generated

through performance writing practice, in conjunction with critical theory and disseminated through a variety of artworks, as well as through the written component of the thesis. It adopts Robin Nelson's articulation of practice-as-research (Nelson, 2006: 105-116). In this model, three modes of knowledge enquiry form a triangle. These are 'practitioner knowledge, critical reflection, conceptual framework' (Nelson, 2006: 114) and we will now discuss each in turn.

The mode 'practitioner knowledge/embodied knowledge' or 'know how' (2006: 114) is produced in this PhD project through the making of a body of performance writing. We draw on a reflexive and discursive process that considers our personal circumstances and compose a series of privately-sited experiments which examine a specific area of millennial precarity (such as, housing, labour, and friendship, food and hospitality). The artworks created are reflections on our experiences: *House Box* examines our encounters of living in rental accommodation; *Desires for Labour* considers our unhappiness we hold for the type of employment we undertake; *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* is a reflection on regeneration and neoliberalism; and *Recipe Book* is a reflection on the importance of friendship. Each of these works and the accompanying chapters can be considered autoethnographic studies that offer insights into how millennials experience precarity.

Autoethnography is:

An approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. This approach challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act. A researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product. (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2010)

In this research there are two of us and as such we inhabit the position of *we* rather than that of *I*. However, as performance studies scholar Tami Spry notes, 'perhaps autoethnography is not about the self at all; perhaps it is instead a wilful embodiment of "we"' (2017: 48). We would argue that performance always has a connection to autoethnography, as a performing body is never separate from the world experience it is connected to and with. As Spry discusses, the performer 'offers her performing body and experiences as the raw material for cultural critique. Her body carries the traces of her historical moment' (2011: 10). In very different ways, we too are offering our experiences and our art making processes as a form of cultural critique that carry the traces of our historical moment.

Prior to beginning this PhD, we used writing to be in touch with one another and share ideas, often through letters. Before beginning the PhD, but after being accepted to the University of Plymouth with our proposal, we kept diaries to document what we felt were the most significant aspects of our everyday lives as millennials. This is how we identified the subject matter we use in this thesis, specifically housing, employment, friendship, food, and place (and a lack of fixedness related to location because of peripatetic lifestyles). We found the common link between these subjects was how these were experienced as precarious or as different to what we might have expected (which we frame in the thesis as hauntological experiences). The use of DIY within our practice became important in part in response to precarity, as a practical means to use what we have available, as well as then informing the making process of the performance writing (how we physically made the objects). The quotidian is central to our practice. This is in part due to the initial approaches we took with the research (such as through keeping

diaries or keeping daily clocking in records as with *Desires for Labour* or reflecting on the relationship we have to rooms in the house and this intrinsically being a quotidian experience that informs the rhythms of our day). However, this is also due to the aspects of millennial precarity we refer to in this thesis as inhibiting our ability to plan for the future. As such, the quotidian becomes felt as part of the 'stuckness' articulated here, as central to how we experience the world as millennials and supplants a projected future. For example, planning for the future (perhaps, saving for a deposit for a house or ensuring security in the future) is replaced with more immediate concerns (co-existing within a house share and managing the relationships both within it and external to it, such as with the landlord, in order to continue living there on a month-by-month basis).

We were self-funded students and needed to work full-time to support ourselves. This does to some extent inform our experience of precarity. As we could not secure permanent academic positions during the period of study, working in supplementary low waged zero hour contracted jobs (specifically hospitality), allowed us to engage in paid academic work on casual contracts when this was available. In turn, in many ways our hospitality jobs enabled us to do this PhD. The autoethnographic aspect of this thesis and the shared dominance of hospitality work in our lives meant that these jobs became important within this practice and our experience of precarity. We have consistently chosen this academic project instead of seeking out alternative jobs; though there is little guarantee that we would not experience precarity if we were in alternative employment; particularly as we were still in the precarious positions discussed in this thesis before we embarked on the PhD and were in full time and/or salaried roles.

Within UK academia there have been two other collaborative practice research PhDs; in contemporary art (Pil and Galia Kollektiv, Goldsmiths, 2013) and in performance (Joanne 'Bob' Whalley and Lee Miller, MMU, 2004). However, both couples are also married and share other aspects of their lives with each other. As such, this is the first collaborative co-authored thesis across the fields of performance writing, sited score-based performance and object-oriented contemporary art to be undertaken by two friends (who are not married). This allows us to reflect on the potential for friendship as a form of critical modelling specifically within this project to explore our questions and aims. Drawing on Mark Fisher's articulation (2014) of a concept developed by Jacques Derrida (2006), we use the term hauntology to refer to a sense of the future being unknown and unexpected: that the socio-economic future we grew up with is now unavailable and we are unable to imagine an alternative future. For us, friendship is a central component to offering alternatives to this sense of 'stuckness'.

We began working together when studying for our master's degree at Wimbledon College of Art, and although we both created individual work, we also worked together on some other projects throughout the duration of our studies. We had a shared interest in participatory and socially engaged practices. We would attend exhibitions together and discuss both our own ideas as well as the work of others (attending conferences and symposia together also). We both spoke about wanting to continue our studies to doctoral level and wanting to work on fairly similar topics but found it difficult to articulate what these projects might be. Through discussions with other friends and upon discovering that co-authored PhD's were possible we

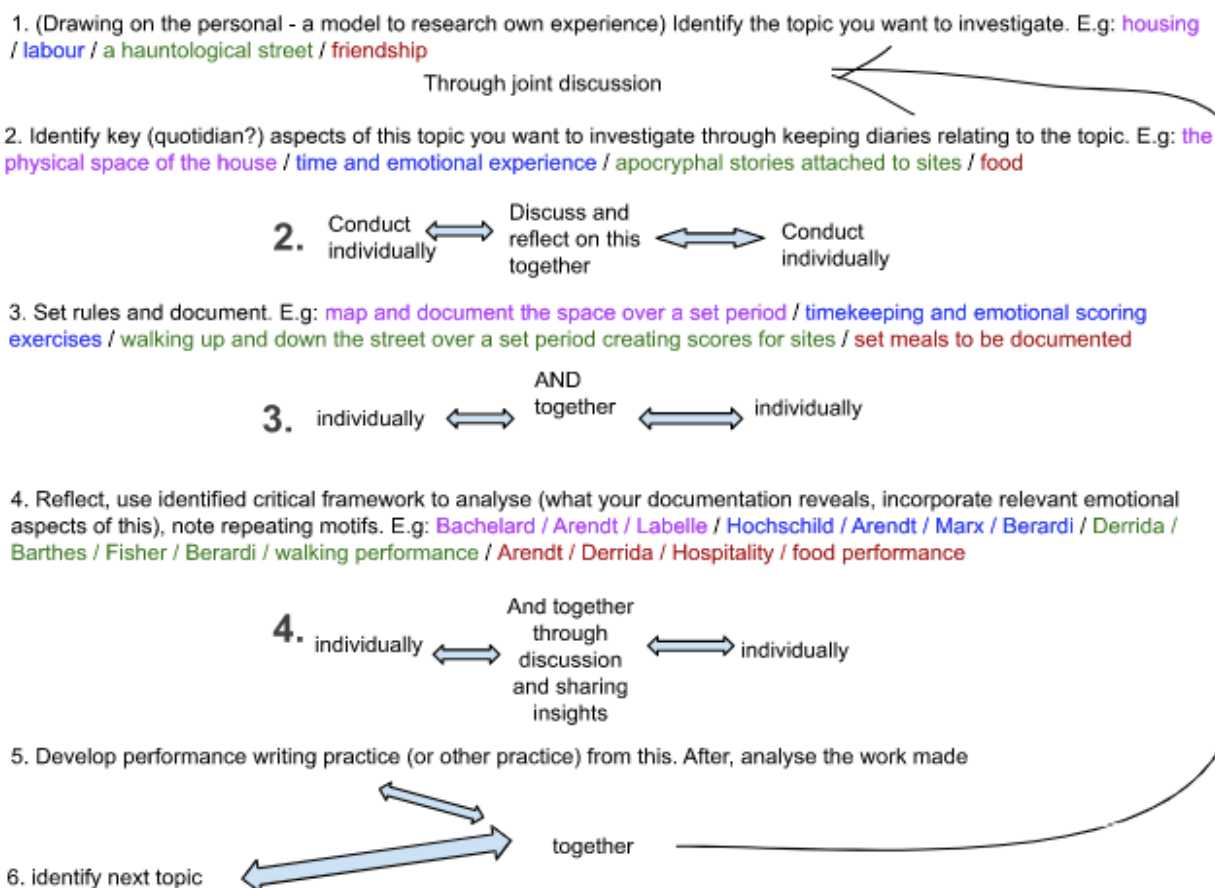
began to investigate this as a possibility for ourselves and we approached several institutions and potential supervisors. As we began to develop our research proposal it became increasingly clear that the desire to work together was becoming a necessity and central to the proposal. This was for two main reasons. The first was that we wanted to explore these shared interests through a collaborative arts practice, and the second was that the ideas that were being produced were happening together, and it felt disingenuous to the research to not explore these collaboratively. This was supported by research into collaborative knowledge production that we were engaging in by theorists such as Deleuze & Guattari and Laura Cull. So even though we were not sure exactly what this practice would be in the preceding years to beginning the PhD, we knew that the ideas existing *between* people was a central concern. This then developed into being about the importance of friendship in relation to millennial life and dealing with precarity.

Due to shared thematic concerns, we refer through the analysis of practice in this thesis to both Joanne Whalley and Lee Miller's writing (in our chapters focusing on hauntology and lost futures) and also Pil and Galia Kollektiv (in our chapters looking at labour and object making). For example, Pil and Galia Kollektiv's research practice focuses upon the relationship between art and politics; specifically, they have written about art and immaterial labour (2005, 2006), and their practice is focused on performance, objects and the avant-garde. However, the performance work they create is different to our own, as they create large scale performances and sculptures. For example, *Concrete Gowns for Immaterial Flows* (2015) was a sculptural installation and performance that 'is comprised of a concrete materialisation of abstract financial charts. It forms a stage upon which a series of

live music performances take place' (Kollektiv and Kollektiv, 2015). Whalley and Miller's PhD research was centred on the creation of a site-specific performance in response to Marc Augé's theory of 'Non-Places' (2009). Their final PhD performance was a work called *Partly Cloudy Chance of Rain* (2002) where the pair renewed their wedding vows in a motorway service station (Whalley and Miller, 2010). Although we differ in that we have not created a large-scale performance we are also investigating specific environmental and social issues. The work of other artists informed our research process in two main ways. The first was through subject matter (an example of this is the consideration of artists who use food in Chapter Seven) and the second was through how other artists informed our understanding and development of performance writing (this is also referred to below in relation to identifying the field).



Our collaborative practice-research methodology for this PhD project is as follows:



**Figure 0.2: diagram showing collaboration process.**

The term ‘we’ is used throughout the thesis to refer to ourselves as co-authors. ‘We’ is used rather than ‘I’ to reflect the plural position of the project and writing. However, there are moments when we do refer to each other and to individual experience. This is usually when we are reflecting on experiences that the other may not have shared. For example, although we both worked in hospitality we did not share the same post or work in the same industry (Katheryn worked in a bar and Chris in a coffee shop). Similarly, although we both lived in rented housing we did not live in the same house for the entire duration of the PhD project (Chris moved in with his partner, Katheryn

stayed living in shared housing with either strangers or friends). However, we both worked at the same university teaching on the same course. As a result, it was sometimes necessary to reflect on these experiences as belonging to one of us and identify who had this experience. As demonstrated in the above diagram, these individual experiences then lead to joint conversations and reflections, which then lead to the production of the practice. Whilst some details of the precarious experience are at times subjective to us as individuals, the thesis reflects largely on a shared position through the characteristics of millennial precarity.

We have developed a specific approach to how we write together, having experimented with different methods and styles. For example, in earlier iterations of work we attempted to sit together and one of us would type and the other one might feed suggestions or ideas. This quickly became unmanageable and unproductive. However, we do still take this approach sometimes when a specific shorter piece of writing needs to be completed with precision about shared vision and vocabulary; the abstract of this thesis is an example of this. Our preferred approach, and the one that was most successful in allowing us to complete the writing for this thesis, was to use Google Docs and to allocate writing tasks. Having previously discussed ideas and responses, we would begin each chapter with a rough outline, and work individually on components. We would then read each other's initial work, make suggestions, add comments, and add changes to what was written. We would continuously discuss the work together to make sure we were both happy with the content, and we did not retain 'ownership' of the sections we had initially worked on. We consider the initial process of dividing up writing as purely a practical task, where the process of putting words on the page is for ease done individually but the ideas and direction

is collectively formed through discussion. At the same time, we do find that understandings also come through the process of writing. We revise and redraft sections we did not initially write, and as such by the time this thesis was submitted, we could not claim individually any single part of the writing, nor could we recognise our individual voices (unless specifically identified as such, e.g., when we refer to an individual personal experience). As such, the academic writing adopts a collective voice. In addition to this, as Google Docs does not track changes in the same manner as Microsoft Word (in that it does not highlight individual authors contributions), we found it to be particularly useful in supporting the development of a collaborative voice.

Our approach with the performance writing practice is slightly different. We would often use diaries and personal notes to record our quotidian experiences (housing, working, eating), and develop the text for the performance writing out of this. As such, whilst a lot of the practice shares a collaborative voice as it refers to shared cultural and economic positions, there are also individual aspects of identity. The academic document however refers to the shared understandings that have come through the performance writing.

Our practice-as-research is produced in two stages: experimentation as quotidian action and as performance writing. In this thesis, we analyse the textual and material qualities of the performance writing and consider both as equal value. An example of this is when we wanted to examine our relationship to our precarious employment contracts, we noted down all the times we clocked in and out of work for a month, distinguishing between 'official' clocking in and out and 'unofficial' (i.e., times we did

work we would not be paid for, and times we chatted or made tea or snuck in tasks required for other jobs whilst at work. We also would note how satisfied with our work we were each day and would consider this in relation to different forms of official and immaterial labour performed. This informed *Desires for Labour*, the practice made in response to our labour conditions, which can be read about in Chapters Four and Five. As explained above, all of the academic writing for this thesis comes from us both. All of the practice has arisen through shared conceptualisation and collective making. Some practical tasks and material elements however have been divided up based on skill set – for example the banner was knitted by Katheryn as Chris is unable to do so (however, if we had more time we would have both physically knitted the banner as it would have allowed Chris the time to learn to knit). Tasks were also divided up between us both on specific projects (for example, Chris did a lot of the cutting of paper for making the zines, which Katheryn (and friends, as discussed in Chapter Five) then bound together). We believe that this is complementary to our collaborative approach, and we wish for all work to be understood as co-created. At no point do we consider any of the physical work to be ‘made’ individually or for the labour involved in this to be unbalanced.

We approach the questions and aims by beginning with an exploration through practice. The research project is guided by our completion of specific cycles of research (through practice) which is then reflected upon and analysed after the fact. The thesis is structured in such a way that demonstrates the order in which we investigated each area of millennial precarity beginning with housing and ending with friendship and food. We do so to develop our own understanding of these areas from

an autoethnographic perspective. This allowed us to develop the next area of investigation once one cycle had been completed.

Our 'conceptual framework' or 'know that', in Nelson's terms, consists of critical and political theory, most notably of work and labour, friendship, semiotics and post-structuralism, hospitality, hauntology and pleasure. There are four key theorists who we engage with in multiple ways throughout this thesis. They are Roland Barthes, Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida and Mark Fisher. The majority of the analytical writing of this thesis followed the completion of a piece of practice. However, in contrast, *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* was made at the same time that its corresponding chapter (Chapter Six) was being drafted. This made it more explicit how performance writing is knowledge producing in the moment, as we were reflecting on and articulating what we were learning as we were making the work and tried to incorporate what we learnt into what we made.

Fundamental to our modelling of how performance writing operates are authorial concepts devised by Roland Barthes. The 'writerly' is understood in relation to the 'readerly', and both concern how a series of semiotic codes (developed by Barthes, 1970) establish or disrupt narrative meaning. Using Barthes, specifically *S/Z* (1970) and *The Preparation of the Novel* (2010) gives us a framework with which to understand how performance writing is read and how it produces a multiplicity of meanings. While we have attached specific meanings to the performance writing that has been produced, it is not intended that this meaning be replicated by others' interactions with it. For example, it is perfectly possible that the material generated for *Desires for Labour* will not lead those who engage with it to reflect upon their own

working conditions. However, the objects are circulated to allow a deeper understanding of their material and textual qualities in relation to our processes of making them and intentions. Although the audience for our practice is something that we always consider (in that, as we make, we imagine others interacting with it), we are specifically interested in the knowledge that is generated through the making as artists, and so we think of the possibility of someone interacting with the work as a potentiality. We draw parallels between this process, and ideas around reimagining the future.

The work of other theorists informed our research in a similar manner; whereby key texts would help us develop our understandings in relation to the focus of the chapter (for example, Derrida and Dufourmantelle's book *Of Hospitality* (2000) informed our understandings in Chapter Seven). However, we did not begin work with an explicit focus on informing our approach through analysis of the work of others. Instead, the work of other artists (see Chapter Two for example) helped us develop a definition of performance writing which we then used in the development of our work. The theory that we used in support of the analysis would influence the subject matter of subsequent 'themes' or cycles of research, expressed in the performance writing. For example, having first considered the relationship between renting and hauntology in Chapter One, we wanted to more explicitly examine the connection between hauntology and performance writing in Chapter Six; this was led by the practice *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are*. This is what led our approach to addressing the questions and aims.

The third mode of knowledge in Nelson's model of practice-as-research is 'critical reflection', which includes 'location in a lineage' (2006: 114). At various moments in the thesis, we refer to artists and art works by way of demonstrating what the field of performance writing can do, to place our performance writing in a lineage, or to consider ways that other artists have explored and expressed a particular concern we are addressing. In Chapter Two, we draw in particular on Fluxus artist Alison Knowles, as we describe a history of performance writing that grew out of Fluxus art and practices and was then established as a field at Dartington College of Arts. Knowles' practice of performance event scores invite multiple modes of interpretation and reperformance and, as such, explicitly offer multiple meanings. We also draw on artist Adrian Piper's practice offers propositions that require the audience to consider their own subjectivity.

In Chapter Two, we also discuss Wrights & Sites as we position map-making as a mode of performance writing and use this in conjunction with score making and propositional texts. We return to Wrights & Sites member, Phil Smith, in Chapter Six, with reference to his practice of Mythogeography. A form of Psychogeography, Smith's definition of his practice helps us articulate the methods we used to conduct aspects of our performance writing that use walking. We refer to artists who have used audio in their practice, and how audio performance places the listener between physically real and imagined locations. When discussing our work concerned with labour, in Chapters Four and Five, we focus on a history of craft in relation to protest, specifically banner making and Craftivism. In Chapter Seven, we draw on a lineage of practices that have used food, in order to set up how and why we have used food

as a way of creating performance writing that explores modes of care through friendship.

In Chapters Seven and Nine we also refer and draw connections to some key contemporary examples of artists using food within their practice. At the heart of our research into this area is the 2012 exhibition *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art* held at Smart Museum of Art, Chicago. We refer to Suzanne Lacy's work *International Dinner Party* as it informs of the ways that we think about how meals can be performance and we look at InCubate's *Sunday Soup* which offers alternative models for arts funding and organisation, using food to generate income. Custom Food Lab is a collective of artists, designers, researchers, growers and activists who are interested in how food is produced and the future of food production. Politics of Food is a residency programme held at Delfina Foundation in London, their aim is to support the development of artists whose practice is connected to food in some way.

The chapters appear in the order they were written, and then returned to and edited; this meant we were able to build on understandings from previous chapters as we were developing the research. This approach aided us in harnessing answers to our research questions and responding to the aims of the project, by building the research as a process in stages; whereby each stage of the research could adapt and respond as needed based on the findings of the previous stage. For example, the thesis writing and performance writing about employment and labour built on the thesis writing and performance writing about housing. The focus on the hauntological



built on these previous two subjects. The focus on friendship and food built on the previous elements again.

### ***Statement of Ethics***

This thesis contains some words and images that were shared with us by a friend and a family member. This was discussed with our supervisory team at the time of writing the thesis and when these inclusions were made. We attended ethics training designed by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC). The following advice was given to PhD students at the time: ethical permission might be required depending on the researcher's role and how they are positioned within a given project. This is especially blurry when research is also an arts practice that inherently includes other people. However, it was determined we did not need ethical permission as: ethical permission might not be required for ad hoc or informal interviews that are not fundamental to your research methodology, or in creative professional practice in which participants are not being represented in any manner or context other than would be normally expected for their role – E.g., an actor in a play or the sitter of a portrait.

We include in this thesis and in the creative practice *Recipe Book* an illustration given to us by Ella Bean. Ella is an illustrator, and this inclusion sits within her role as an illustrator. We also include screenshots of texts sent by Katheryn's Mum. These are considered as ad hoc or informal interactions that are not fundamental to our research methodology.

In no way did either of these contributors engage in any further contextual research as part of the thesis, such as through interviews about their participation. At the time, it was confirmed with the chair of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee that ethical permission was not needed.

However, we have included email correspondence in Appendix C that confirms that the relevant parties give permission for their words and images to be included in this thesis. This appendix also details where in the thesis these contributions are included.

### ***Audiences, Participants and Engaging with the Practice-as-Research***

In this thesis we use the term 'reader-audience' and 'reader-audience member' rather than simply reader or audience member. We do so to highlight the plural ways the work operates. As performance writing straddles and playfully challenges the boundaries of both writing and performance it is important to acknowledge the ways that it is interacted with and received. Reader-audience members are not always both *at the same time* but addressing them in this way points to the fact that this is a slippery relationship (we return to this in Chapter Two). While this research project refers to friends and family, we have attempted to maintain their anonymity (with the exception of crediting people for their work – for example, Ella Bean provided an illustration; Rosy Whitemore provided photographs documenting the work). *House Box* refers to housemates by first name only. *Recipe Book* refers to friends and family by an initial. We were joined for some meals in the process of *The Meal Project*, however ethical consent was not needed for this: we do not define these people as research participants, as having friends with us for food is part of normal

daily life for us, and we did not ask for responses or involve them in the research beyond being there for the experience of sharing food.

The audience for the practice we have made for this PhD, and the audience for the research outcomes of that artwork, are not always the same. The audience for the artwork tends to be invited. For example, we have given zines to friends, or it is encountered by people at conferences. These are usually postgraduate researchers like ourselves, early career academics, and our supervisors and similarly placed academics. The audience in this sense have an academic interest in arts research. *Desires for Labour* was exhibited in the Practice-as-Research gallery as part of the Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA) annual conference at the University of Exeter in 2019, and the zines which make up a part of this trilogy of work are distributed through The Good Press bookshop in Glasgow. The audience *while* we make the work tends to differ, as on occasion we have had the help of friends to construct things in time to meet a deadline, or we talk with our friends about what we're making. Whilst these friends do often by coincidence have an interest in art, this is not how we know them, nor is that interest a particularly important aspect of those friendships. Often, these are people we have met through our hospitality jobs. While these are who we think of as the research being 'for', it is important to emphasise that the focus of this research is not on audience response.

For the purpose of examination, the performance writing is to be posted to the examiners, as a way of privately (and at their own pace) of engaging with the work. Some works can be reused and re-played with. We invite the examiners to keep these or pass on as they desire. However, *House Box* is to be posted on and we

provide instructions for sending this on to the next person, mirroring an ongoing process of sharing, reinterpreting, and of collaboration that reflects the cumulative nature of knowledge. The banner for *Desires for Labour* will be present for examiners in our Viva examination.

### ***Thesis Structure and Chapter Content***

We ask that the examiners interact with *House Box* before reading Chapter One.

Chapter One is an article that we wrote in 2018, arising directly from this PhD research, and was published in 2020 as 'Performing millennial housing precarity: how (not) to live together' in the *Studies in Theatre and Performance Special Edition: Housing, Performance and Activism* (Volume 40, Number 1). The article contextualises different generational approaches to notions of home and house, referring to social changes within housing post World War II, and arrives at the current UK housing crisis. It was written as we were locating our experience of domestic precarity, and it provides useful context through which to consider *House Box* in particular (see Figure 0.3). The article also acts as an extension of this introduction and a microcosm of the first part of the thesis; within it we touch upon many of the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis that we return to in other chapters.<sup>7</sup> *House Box* is discussed in more detail in Chapters Two and Three along with more detail on housing precarity. We return to Mark Fisher, Derrida and hauntology in Chapter Six. Friendship is discussed and referred to throughout the thesis but specifically in Chapters Seven and Nine, and hosts and hospitality return in Chapters Seven and Nine also.

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<sup>7</sup> This means that there is some repetition of content in this chapter but this article provides an in-depth contextualisation of our autoethnographic millennial experience.



**Figure 0.3: *House Box* (Image Credit: Rosy Whitemore).**

In Chapter Two, 'On Performance Writing', we explain how we use the term performance writing and discuss how this applies to the first work we made for this thesis, *House Box* (shown in Figure 0.3 above). We begin to discuss performance writing as a means of disseminating experience and to frame the literary theories we draw on. This chapter discusses a history of performance writing, providing a literature review of the field and placing our work in a lineage that includes Alison Knowles, Adrian Piper, and Wrights & Sites. We discuss the different modes that performance writing can take, such as scores, propositions and mapping.

Chapter Three, 'Domestic Precarity' expands on ideas raised in the article that comprises Chapter One. It discusses theories of public and private in relation to shared housing, drawing on Hannah Arendt's theory of public and private realms in *The Human Condition* (1958), and introduces hauntology to this project, with reference to Mark Fisher's *Ghosts of My Life* (2014). Fisher uses examples from culture to highlight the repetition of the past, for example the sounds of old records appearing on new music to give it a 'feeling' of the past.

We ask the examiners to look at *Desires for Labour* in conjunction with the following two chapters (see Figures 0.4, 0.5). The banner (Figure 0.6) discussed here will be available at the viva examination.

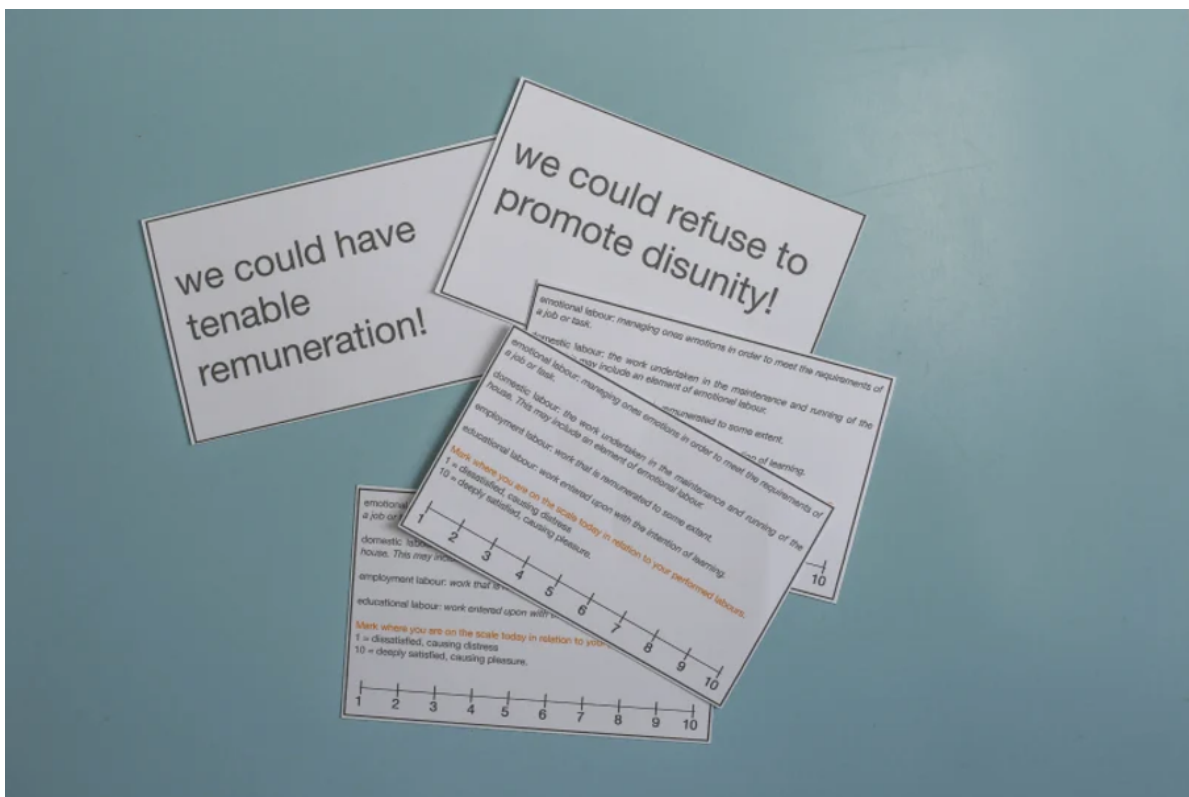


Figure 0.4: *Desires for Labour* (business cards). Image Credit: Rosy Whittemore.



Figure 0.5: *Desires for Labour (Zines)*. Image Credit: Rosy Whittemore.



Figure 0.6: *Desires for Labour (Banner)*. Image Credit: Rosy Whittemore.

In Chapter Four, 'Labour, Bodies, Capitalism and Object Making', we define the different types of labour we perform and frame our experience of labour as precarious. We discuss the experiments we conducted in the devising process of making the performance writing and discuss a series of four slogans we have composed for this. We refer to the trilogy of works, *Desires for Labour*, and focus on one aspect of that work in depth here: a banner. We use as a critical framework Hannah Arendt's definition of work, labour and action, and draw on a Marxist perspective of manifestos, and a left-wing history of banners. We then go on to discuss time in relation to labour, craft, and slow pleasures as modes of resistance, drawing on Franco 'Bifo' Berardi and his understanding of the term 'post-futurism' (2015).

In Chapter Five, 'From Assemblages to Objects', we analyse the remaining two pieces of performance writing in *Desires for Labour*. We frame the practice as an assemblage, drawing on Deleuze and Guatarri, making connections to the collaborative nature of the work and how it is encountered, and the plural nature of interpretation and meaning-making. This chapter builds upon the definition of performance writing developed in Chapter Two by focusing on how it operates for us (rather than more generally). We begin to discuss the use value of performance writing and contextualise this via Sara Ahmed's discussion of queer phenomenology.

We ask the reader to look at *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* (see Figure 0.7) in conjunction with reading the next chapter. You may also want to revisit *House Box*.





**Figure 0.7: *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are*. Image Credit: Ella Bean.**

Chapter Six, 'From Arrivants to Hauntology and Lost Futures', discusses in depth the concept of hauntology which has been introduced previously in the thesis. We use the practice-research, *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are*, to explore how performance writing can be a hauntological practice. We reflect on how this work was composed, using both the process and analysis of the performance writing object to do so, and identify audio performance and walking works that served as reference points for the audio aspect of this performance writing, including Janet

Cardiff's *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* (1999) and Playgroup's *Berlin Love Tour* (2012). We return to *House Box* through this discussion of hauntology and begin to discuss aspects of hope, linked to the understanding of performance writing as writerly.

Chapter Seven, 'Food, Meals, Friendship', discusses the process, referred to as *The Meal Project*,<sup>8</sup> that led to the performance writing, *Recipe Book*. We begin with a survey of performance and art practices that have used food, in order to frame how our research sits within this lineage and how the aims for our use of food differs from other performance art works. We then discuss the dual meaning of hospitality both as making space for others and as a business (as relating to our paid employment in hospitality), using Jacques Derrida's and Anne Dufourmantelle's *Of Hospitality* (1997) to do so. We link this to Hannah Arendt's understanding of friendship as articulated by Jon Nixon in *Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Friendship* (2015). We then discuss how this informs *The Meal Project*, and how we have used hospitality in our friendship. We begin to position friendship as a collaborative act that addresses a crisis of imagination towards the future and offers modes of care against neoliberal fatigue.

Chapter Eight, 'Recipe Book' is a selection of recipes from *Recipe Book*, available here as a digital archive of the physical book. This does not replace *Recipe Book* but is a reference point in addition to the artwork submitted.

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<sup>8</sup> *The Meal Project* is the only element of process and experimentation we have named in this way. Whilst in line with the other processes used in this research, which took place as experiments without an audience, it involved others (friends and family) and so wasn't conducted privately in the same way as the other works were, which only involved the two of us.

At this point, we ask the examiners to engage with both the recipes in Chapter Eight and with *Recipe Book* itself.

Chapter Nine, 'On Recipes as Performance Writing' reflects upon *Recipe Book*, which was the performance writing produced in response to *The Meal Project*, examining both the textuality and materiality of the book, through the lens of DIY art practices. We apply understandings of the writerly to *Recipe Book*, and further elucidate how performance writing seeks a way to understand and articulate both the authors' and readers' embodied experiences of precarity.

This PhD thesis, about the value of performance writing within the context of millennial precarity, is positioned within the field of performance studies, although it also relates to aspects of visual arts. It may also point to how literary concepts can be reframed and applied to performance. We hope we are able to offer insights into collaboration and co-authorship both as a methodology, and as a process of interpretation. We also hope that the description of millennial experience and our expression of politics within this thesis may resonate with other millennials who occupy the same political space. We are thinking here specifically of friends, colleagues and housemates whose daily lives are influenced by a shared experience of (and an anxiety about) precarity.

### ***Typographical Errors***

The thesis contains images of our performance writing and quotes from our performance writing. Chapter Four also contains diary entries that are presented in text boxes. Both of these use non-academic phrasing including contractions, and in

places we intentionally included typographical errors. These are presented unchanged in keeping with guidelines for including previously published material. The use of informal grammatical phrasing and 'mistakes' that were kept through the process of devising our performance writing reflect the intentionally informal style of our performance writing, that is reflective of our communication between us as friends.

Please note, in keeping with university regulations, the previously published work in the appendices is presented as published.

## Preface to Chapter One:

The following chapter was written in the early stages of the PhD process and is reflective of our experience of housing as it relates to millennial precarity. This account follows on from making *House Box* (discussed further in Chapter Two). This chapter appears as it was originally published, with the exception of some additional footnotes and some small edits for the sake of clarity.

At this time, we were writing from the perspective of living together in a house share. Chris had moved to Manchester about two years previously and Katheryn in the previous year, both from London. As such, there was a degree of novelty to our position at this time, as we forged new friendships through this house share and through the relocation. These dynamics are reflected in the anecdotal aspects of this Chapter. However, despite the novelty, the insecurity with our housing situation was familiar, and we begin to articulate here the anxieties related to this. This experience relates to the hauntological, which is introduced here through Mark Fisher, and which resonates with our understanding of millennial precarity. We return to hauntology in Chapter Six. The chapter also briefly introduces other theorists returned to later in the thesis, specifically Derrida (hosting) and Arendt (the potential of friendship). The chapter was the beginning of our understandings of some of these concepts which helped us establish what future subjects of the thesis and performance writing would be.

This chapter also serves to establish what is referred to by 'millennial', and as such frames the position of the authors in the thesis. Whilst the chapter was published as an article in 2020, sections were drafted from 2017 onwards. The reference to

'young people' reflects this, and at the time of completing this thesis many millennials are aging out of that description. We also refer here to millennials as being born between 1980 — 2000. Since writing, generation Z have come of age and this has shifted how these generations are discussed. Some sociological studies now define the peak millennial years as ending in 1996, and generation Z being born between 1997 — 2012. This reflects the change in life experiences people born after 1997 might expect, based on broader sociological changes (such as the dominance of the internet) (Dimock, 2019). This is not reflected in this chapter and is highlighted here to demonstrate the shifting position of 'young people' since writing this account.

By identifying these experiences, this chapter provides grounding material for our first research aim — to situate and interrogate our experience of millennial precarity — and begins to explore our research questions about the use of autoethnographic process and performance writing as a creative strategy to interrogate out cultural, social and economic positioning.

## Chapter One: Performing Millennial Housing Precarity: How (not) to Live Together<sup>9</sup>

This is a personal account of our particular experience of shared living in rented accommodation through the lens of the millennial - the generation we belong to. This account is not representative of everyone in that generation, and though it draws on wider experiences of housing precarity, it is illustrated through our own anecdotal experience. The exact boundary of 'millennial' is contested, and is often used as a catch all term to describe 'young people'. However, we are defining millennial as the generation born between 1982-2000, who are likely to face less financial growth than previous generations despite increases in other areas of social growth (such as access to education, LGBT rights) (Reuters, 14/11/2017). In the UK this is particularly felt in regards to housing, where a relative lack of regulation over the private rental sector, combined with high deposits for mortgages that renders buying property unattainable for many, and the decimation of social housing models means that renting is often insecure and expensive (Corlett & Judge, 2017).<sup>10</sup> For the last fifteen years we have each lived in rented accommodation, on various types of tenancies. These include assured shorthold tenancies (as an individual in a property) and joint tenancies (where all tenant's share the contract and mutually responsible for all rent), both on fixed term and periodic (that is rolling month-by-month) contracts. In the houses / flats where we

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<sup>9</sup> This chapter was published as: Katheryn Owens & Chris Green (2020) "Performing millennial housing precarity: how (not) to live together", *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 40:1, 44-55 DOI: <https://doi-org.plymouth.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/14682761.2019.1689738>. This is the green open access version.

<sup>10</sup> Grassroots campaigning has been significant in improving private rental regulation; for example from June 2019 landlords will be unable to charge tenancy fees -(e.g., such as for signing the tenancy agreement; this is the Tenants Fees Bill), and in April 2019 the government announced plans to amend or end section 21, where landlords are currently able to evict tenants through 'no fault' with only eight week's notice. The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018, in effect from March 2019 means rented accommodation must be safe and fit for human habitation. However, it is not clear yet what in practice will happen with regards to tenants' security, and a lack of rent control can still make renting disproportionately expensive and insecure.

have lived, the tenancies have been private and the landlord has lived off site. We have also lived in excluded tenancies and lodged without formal written tenancy agreements (where in effect, we have paid our housemate's mortgage for them, without any of the security of ownership) (Gov.uk n.d.). In theory, assured shorthold tenancies give you greater security as a tenant, as currently two month's notice to evict is required, and you are only liable for your portion of the rent. Rent itself can be increased with one month's notice (Section 13, Housing Act 1988). In practice, without the income to move easily, two month's eviction notice is still stressful<sup>11</sup>, and until June 2019 some agencies require (re)signing and administration fees – these hidden costs can be upwards of £100 to stay in a property where you already reside. (Anecdotally, our mutual friends all try to rent directly from the landlord rather than through an agency as a means to avoid these signing fees). The last couple of years has seen a rise in renter's activism and unions (local initiatives include Greater Manchester Housing Action and the union ACORN, with branches in Bristol, Brighton, Manchester, Sheffield and Newcastle), but even when tenant's do have access to legal advice or are aware of their rights, their relationship to their dwelling can feel precarious and down to luck. Sometimes there are safety concerns with the properties. We are always made aware that the house we pay for is not ours, cannot be made to look as if it is ours, and is not secure<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> This is known as Section 21, and is a no fault eviction. Landlords can evict tenants without reason and regardless of whether the tenant has broken the terms of the tenancy agreement or not. This hinders tenants' sense of security in the property.

<sup>12</sup> By 'is not secure' we refer to a lack of security in that we may not be able to remain long term in the house and we do not know exactly how long we will be able to remain.



An Anecdote:

Chris moved into the house on the 1<sup>st</sup> November, the day after Halloween. He had been out the night before to a fancy dress party. When he arrived at the house he came with a blue wig, the wig had been placed in his bag without him knowing by his previous housemate – it had been a part of his housemate’s costume the night before. Once settled in, Chris hid the wig in Katheryn’s room. It became a game:

1. Hide the blue wig in the other person’s room.
2. Find the blue wig in your own room.
3. Repeat.

After moving out, the blue wig stayed hidden, and was not found until much later on. A kind of ghost of the game.

We balance asking for work to be done with not wanting to be ‘difficult’ – as tenant’s we are easy to evict and replace. We cannot decorate, we often blu-tak pictures to the walls instead of hanging them in frames; both a mark of temporariness and of making sure no traces are left behind in order to ensure deposits are returned (this particular example has often been stipulated in our tenancy agreements). We may choose to ignore these clauses, but even a minor anxiety that we are breaking a rule is still an anxiety. There may be inspections (with twenty-four hour’s notice) in which we are judged. We find it is rare amongst our friends to be able to stay in one property for longer than 24 months. The rent may increase and people cannot afford to stay. The relationships with landlords or amongst tenant’s may break down. When we do stay for longer, the configuration of tenant's changes so often it can feel like living in several different houses. We cannot give any concrete reason for why in our experience tenancies seem to be so short term, other than a precarity with regards to housing is felt in other aspects of our lives also. For example, it is felt in a lack of security with regards to our and our peers' employment (we work a combination of skilled and unskilled zero hour’s contract jobs to get by, and have instances of being employed on fixed term contracts dependent on funding). This means that many of our peers have also had several instances of ‘starting over’: in new cities, new jobs or careers, even amongst those of us who

are not seeking out peripatetic lifestyles. When your cost of living is dependent on living with others, and those others are also in a state of insecurity, the house becomes a site of further insecurity – mutually, the tenants ability to stay in a familiar set up is dependent on tenant's sharing a degree of security.

It is a doubling of anxiety – anxiety for your own circumstances, co-tenant's anxiety over their circumstances, and anxiety for how this impacts on one another. We feel living this way puts us in a state of extended adolescence. Frequently moving is expensive. It involves repeated negotiation of new environments and dynamics. We have much more ability to do this than a lot of people - we have people we can rely on to help us, and as a result have not experienced being made homeless; though the potential of this happening still exists and there is still a level of psychological impact, through anxiety and fear. This sense of insecurity is one we take for granted, so when we found ourselves living together for a time, we decided to try to map and actively notice this experience. We wanted to look for the pleasures in consistently living with others on a short-term basis, to notice the joys as a means of resisting the felt anxiety from precarity. There is a tension here: living with others can be both joyful and deeply challenging at the same time.

Hallway.

The intersection of the house.

The unavoidable space.

The way in / the way out.

Paths crossing.

Smells spilling out.

Noises colliding.

Conflicts arising.

In shared housing space is fought for; this is even the case in the ‘non-places’ of the house - the hallways and landings. People’s washing, people's rubbish and objects that spill out of bedrooms often occupy these spaces. This can cause interruptions to the way others use these spaces.

The housing crisis is, for us, embodied as domestic anxiety. Old arguments about who does what chore or who pays for what exist beyond the specificities of the relationships between the occupants of the house, becoming instead a question of year on year, who will the people who live here even be? We think of this domestic anxiety as one of the experiences of the millennial generation coming of age in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis which brought with it:

- austerity
- the rise of zero hour un-fixed employment contracts — where some months income does not meet the cost of housing and yet housing is often predicated on having a specific type of income: a quick search for rooms online often shows the disclaimer in adverts ‘no DSS’ (i.e. no benefits recipients; must be employed or have independent wealth), limiting further the options for those who find themselves unemployed or without someone to meet the cost of their housing
- rises in tuition fees

- fears for the future of the NHS
- and more recently the uncertainty for the UK that Brexit brings, along with the housing crisis.<sup>13</sup>

We refer to instability below both as a lack of affordability and autonomy around renting, and by drawing attention to how shared houses exist in multiple iterations – an instability of domestic arrangements between co-tenants.

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<sup>13</sup> 'Brexit' is the common colloquialism to refer to the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016 UK referendum to choose whether to remain or leave the European Economic Union (often referred to by the shorthand 'EU'). The referendum was not legally binding, but following results of 48.1% voting to remain and 51.9% voting to leave, the Conservative government began proceedings to leave the EU on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017 when Prime Minister Theresa May triggered Article 50 through writing to European Council President Donald Tusk, which was completed on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020 following an extension period to Article 50 whilst the terms of Brexit were agreed. The date of 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020 was the beginning of a transition period with the UK formally leaving the EU, and the end of the transition period on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 being the date the UK formally left single market and customs union aspects of the EU. The outcome of the referendum resulted in then Prime Minister David Cameron resigning (as he led the remain campaign). (Walker, 2021)

Leaving the EU was unprecedented, and there was much speculation about the impact of the decision, including concerns around funding that parts of the UK receive from the EU, import, export and trade restrictions, as well as the impact of the freedom of movement around Europe due to new visa restrictions on travel, length of stay, right to study and right to work, as well as legal protections that come through the EU (for example, whether the UK would abide by the European Court of Human Rights, which as of the time of writing in May 2023 it does). Significantly, at the time of the referendum, the potential ways in which these issues might be resolved was unknown.

The housing crisis refers to on-going access issues to affordable housing, which includes but is not limited to a social housing deficit, lack of private rental regulation and rental costs that consume a large portion of wages that are not in line with inflation (see below), resultant difficulties saving for mortgage deposits, and difficulty accessing mortgages.

This crisis is ongoing, with rental prices growing at record rates, at an increase of 4.9% in March 2023 from and increased of 4.8% in the year up to February 2023, and the National Office for Statistics finding that 36% of adults find it 'very' or 'somewhat difficult' to pay rent and mortgage costs (Office for National Statistics, 5 May 2023). A 2020 report found that in England an average of 32% of wages was spent on rent for private renters, with this increasing to an average of 42% in London. (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019-20). These costs do not include associated costs such as bills and insurance, which can make it difficult to save.

Food.

The role and function of food within this house is somewhat romanticised. At best, food has been a centre around which things and people gather; it has brought us together and enabled us to connect. It has provided moments of friendship. In some ways food has become mythical. In *Mythologies* (1993) Barthes notes,

‘...[O]rnamental cookery is indeed supported by wholly mythical economics. This is an openly dream-like cookery, as proved in fact by the photographs in *Elle*, which never show the dishes except from a high angle, as objects at once near and inaccessible, whose consumption can perfectly well be accomplished simply by looking’ (Barthes, 1993: 79).

We draw on the visual pleasure of the food we serve each other, as a signal of togetherness, companionship and community. It represents the effort we put towards making the house feel comfortable for one another. In times where we are less social with one another, we refer back to these meals in passing conversation... ‘remember when...?’ In contrast to Barthes noting food viewed from above in the pages of glossy magazines (now, for the millennial generation, food is often presented in stylised photography through the social media platform Instagram), we recall these meals instead from below; piling food on plates on the coffee table that we sit around on the floor on cushions, not having enough chairs for everyone. The act of eating encompasses processes of cooking, sitting together, and afterwards all declaring we are full, a little drunk, and content. Imagining and remembering replace looking. These meals are a way of indulging in being together - a form of greed and excess we’ve been able to access.

About the house: This account is about the period between November 2015 and March 2017, in a shared house made up of six people and a dog, in South Manchester. In this time there were several configurations of tenants; relationships and dynamics never fully fixed. The tenants were aged between 23 and 34, with the majority being in their early thirties, they had a range of relationship statuses and sexual identities including one co-habiting couple, identifying as male and female, and came from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The types of precarity housemates faced varied from tenant to tenant, and included factors such as health and race. The tenants had a range of employment statuses, from secure professional

employment to semi-precarious contracts to mature students to unemployed. The majority of the tenants had at some point in their lives attended an art college.

#### Growth.

The garden is an extension of the kitchen and living spaces.

The plants we put in the ground are gifts for the landlord and future tenants. We grow for unknown people: we will not be in this house to enjoy them. (This is the same with home ownership too, if you do not live there long term). If we want to keep a plant, we keep it in a pot, we stunt its growth.

The authors of this piece are friends and research partners, one female one male, and were in this house due to unplanned circumstances. For the majority of the tenants, leaving the property for the final time was also due to unforeseeable circumstances. Each tenant lived in this shared house because they could not afford to live alone.

#### Noise.

Sound artist Brandon Labelle's book *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life* (2010), contains passages about the development of technologies resulting in sound from other homes intruding on one's private spaces, bringing 'neighbours into unexpected contact' and 'giving way to new forms of connectivity' (Labelle, 2010: 52) that resonate on an even more local scale. We now share our houses and our dwellings with people who for the previous generation may have been neighbours. The sense of neighbourhood within the street gives way to cultivating a neighbourhood within the home. We hear sounds spilling out from other houses (someone's vacuum cleaner, someone's television) and we hear these sounds on entering our own houses; six people's lives audible through the walls and the gaps beneath the doors.

Currently, the UK has a housing system that places an emphasis on ownership which reduces the autonomy of those who do not own<sup>14</sup>. Since April 2007 in the UK deposits must be held in a protection scheme, which ensures that deductions are reasonable.<sup>15</sup> However, even without a delay in the return of a deposit, tenants are left with a gap between putting down the deposit for their next house, and receiving back the deposit for the property they have just vacated. A way to keep renting costs down on a monthly basis, particularly as a single person, is to share with others. Currently, there are too few alternatives to private renting or ownership, which affects ourselves and renters from different generations (e.g., a deficit of housing association and council housing stock, varying lengths of waiting lists in different council wards for these properties, cultural unfamiliarity or precedent with regards to co-ops<sup>16</sup> in the UK, low supply of charitable housing based on particular needs).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The documentary *Dispossession: The Great Social Housing Swindle*, describes the move towards ownership and the social cost of this (Sng, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Depending on the deposit scheme, landlords may have between 10-14 days to initially respond to claims, disputes over these amounts can take long periods of time to resolve (the scheme means that tenants and landlords can use the dispute resolution service as arbitrator) (Shelter n.d.).

<sup>16</sup> 'Co-ops' here refer to cooperative housing models whereby tenants are jointly responsible for bills and rent / mortgages but jointly manage this themselves, and as such for the period of tenancy they co-own the property (but this ownership is not the same model of ownership as privately owning a house, in which property forms part of the individual's estate and may be bequeathed in their will).

<sup>17</sup> Accompanying issues with shared spaces still stand (negotiating use of space, noises encroaching onto others, mess and dirt and negotiating cleaning), and depending on the status of the co-op, investment capital is still required.

Housing co-ops are not as frequently available as private lets due to a number of factors, including a lack of existing co-ops, that may have waiting lists (though not all co-ops operate waiting lists) and vacancies are quite unusual as a result (Shelter, 2023); This is substantiated by the following: in 2020 196,000 people in the UK lived in housing coops (Doherty, 2020) compared to 4.4 million households renting in England alone in the same period (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019-20)

Sleeping Piece.

Identify all of the areas in your bedroom where sleep may be possible.

Do NOT include your bed.

This could be - in the wardrobe, under the bed, under a desk, under a table behind the curtains.

Sleep in them all.

We expected a future based on our parents' generation's experience, a future that is no longer available. We know we desire something different to what we currently exist within, but we have not arrived at an alternative model yet. For the authors housing is in a liminal moment, caught between the past and (unknown) future models. We do not feel the pull towards ownership, which is out of reach, and yet we feel the impact of the model of renting we live with. This means 'home', rather than being a retreat, is a disorientating place. This liminality or disconnection to our dwelling provokes a feeling of anxiety, coupled with a real uncertainty and insecurity. This gap between expectation and desire, lived reality and the language we have available to discuss models of housing is unsettling in that we are faced with the familiar and unfamiliar; the house is *unheimlich*<sup>18</sup> (Freud, 2003). Mark Fisher describes this lost future as closing an imaginative gap:

[w]hat haunts the digital cul-de-sacs of the twentieth-first century is not so much the past as all the futures the twentieth century taught us to anticipate... More broadly, and more troublingly, the disappearance of the future meant the disappearance of a whole mode of social imagination: the capacity to conceive of a world radically different from the one in which we currently live.

(Fisher, 2012: 16).

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<sup>18</sup> The *unheimlich* refers to the feeling of the uncanny, of something seeming familiar yet unfamiliar at the same time. Freud wrote of the *heimlich* as 'belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, dear and intimate, homely' (2003: 126) and of the *unheimlich* as conversely unhomely. *Unheimlich* translates as unhomely but Freud describes it as closely relating in meaning to the uncanny, 'that species of the frightening that that goes back to what once was well known and had long been familiar' (2003: 124). For us, we find our relationship to housing to be at times unhomely (as opposed to intimate in the sense of the homely), and to be at times to be uncanny in its familiarity and yet difference from the familiar.



This disappearance of the future means that the future one might once have imagined (of a recognisable form of individual/couple homeownership) remains a fantasy — but in its place is the opportunity to reimagine how we might approach housing. This requires a practical and a social reimagining. We find ourselves oscillating between wanting to be able to buy, to a lack of interest in ownership and even of wanting to celebrate sharing. This imaginative leap now needs practical change. Housing as it stands is out of sync with the realities of renters' experience. This might mean regulation of the rental market to allow for a more Berlin style model<sup>19</sup>, long-term rent controlled lets with a degree of autonomy for tenants, or it might mean finding ways to co-own amongst groups of individuals. It is uncertain as of now how the 2017 manifesto pledges from both the Labour and Conservative parties to increase council stock will be effective in the long term or differ from previous models of social housing.

Bathroom : Luxury.

Undress.

Press your body against the tiles.

Press your body against the mirror.

Run a bath.

Get in the bath.

Wait for the water to go cold.

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<sup>19</sup> Berlin style model refers to a system where renting is seen as a norm, or a choice as opposed to something you are stuck with until you can afford to buy. 80% of the Berlin population are renters, and historically renting is perceived as a secure housing option. However, this may be a fallacy as in 2018 a campaign was launched to re-socialise housing in Berlin as a result of rising costs following real estate investment (Vasudevan, 2021).

There is a relationship between domestic anxiety and Derrida's concept of hauntology (Derrida, 2006). Tenants have a sense of something or someone intangible having come before, particularly in a shared house, where individuals may come and go, so there is crossover between different iterations of the house, and there is a period of figuring out how to fit in with these different past iterations. An example of this from our own experience could be the kitchen dance (see below), where new tenants slide into a way of being that was established with tenants that predate them, and whom they have never met. Another example is the physical traces left behind, such as a broken door handle, or through the emotional memory of someone who has left, but who is still talked about by those who lived with them.

#### Kitchen Dance Piece.

This is best done at peak kitchen use time, although it can be done alone.

Move around the room avoiding contact with as many people / objects / non-human animals as possible.

Do this whilst:

- Preparing food
- Preparing drinks
- Washing dishes
- Sweeping the floor

If you have a dinner party, teach others your kitchen dance.

The tenants that make up these past iterations are at once real, a series of memories, and an abstract concept – unreachable but still alive.

In their discussion of hauntology in relation to performance practice, Whalley & Miller, after asserting that 'we are all ghosts', note that:

[hauntology] brings together haunting and ontology, to create a disembodied alternative to the branch of metaphysics that deals with the messy business of *being*. Ontology is the interrogation of thingness, a process undertaken in recognition that to be a thing, it is necessary to have been. Thus hauntology allows a way to step into a dialogue with those things that never were.

(Whalley & Miller, 2016: 30).

Hauntology is felt on two levels in shared renting. Firstly, it is felt from the past, as a sense of the presence of others who are neither dead nor alive. Secondly it is felt as what Fisher describes as a ‘disappearance of the future’: the disappearance of a recognisable housing future, and how that intersects with other aspects of ‘the future’ (Fisher, 2012: 16). Haunting is especially felt in the communal areas, being overlaid with our memories of shared interactions, of other tenants recounting memories of times shared with tenants we have not met.

Hosts.

The shared house is a constant site of negotiation. One's autonomy amongst others is given up; we each interrupt and disrupt one another, we encounter strangers in the hallways. Derrida suggests that in order to be hospitable one must have power over their own home (although he also troubles the concept of hosting as never being truly possible):

I want to be master at home (ipse, potis, potens, head of house, we have all seen that), to be able to receive whomever I like there. Anyone who encroaches on my "at home", on my power of hospitality, on my sovereignty at host, I start to regard them as an undesirable foreigner, and virtually as an enemy. This other becomes a hostile subject, and I risk becoming their hostage.

(Derrida, 2000: 55).

As tenants, we find ourselves shifting between playing host and guest; between troubling the space of others in the house and seeking space of our own; between being more or less familiar with the workings of the house than others depending on length of occupation; of encountering the landlord and playing both host and guest simultaneously, being the landlord's hostage. We oscillate between frustration at feeling encroached on and the erosion of a private life, anxiety at taking up space and excitement at the unexpected pleasures the guests of others can bring.

If after a tenant leaves they maintain friendships with the remaining tenants, then on returning to the house they are faced with another kind of haunting, or a sense of the uncanny. Visiting a building that is familiar, known, and yet different; one that cannot be returned to in the same way as before. The individual is now not the same as they were when they lived there and the new iteration of tenants leave their own markers on the place: this house is now a different house.

## The Potential of Friendship.

We want to think about the possibilities that come with living with friends: what might be achieved from being together, and how we can be strengthened by living with others? We know that there are positives in this plurality.

For Hannah Arendt ‘the polis, properly speaking is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organisation of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be’ (Arendt, 1998: 198).

Whilst Arendt’s stance implies that being together means that all have the same means to act and speak visibly (and as Judith Butler contends that not only is this a problematic concept when faced with different types of violence, oppression and recognition but also that being visible might not be the best means of resistance for everyone [Butler, 2015: 55]). This notion of whether one has the means to act and speak, to safely appear, is reflected back in housing – in writing this essay we are writing from the position of having some means. We are describing a type of precarity and uncertainty, but we are doing so from within a house, with the means to have our position heard. Housing precarity precludes many from having a voice, as well as from access to shelter. Within our position, we feel that there is some significance in relation to the power of coming together. We recognise the political potential of house sharing to provoke conversation and action, to utilise the friendships formed to seek out safer models of housing together.

Another haunting: at the time of writing, all tenants have left the house referred to above; the landlords choosing to evict the tenants in order to do required maintenance. This essay is a memory of that house, a palimpsest for the next houses we rent in, these memories lying underneath the experiences of our new houses and housemate relationships. The house exists as a ghost.

## Chapter Two: On Performance Writing

Please interact with *House Box* before reading this chapter, which you will receive in the post.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to define and situate the practice of performance writing. We arrive at this definition through a discussion of 'what is performance' and 'what is writing'. Following this, we discuss the textuality of performance writing through Barthes, which situates our definition and use of performance writing within literary theory.

The discussion of textuality allows us to expand on our definition and analysis of performance writing throughout the thesis as the research develops. The use of Barthes underpins the interaction between writing and performance, where interaction with a text is an activity, and the reader and text are in a relationship of the production of meaning. The use of Barthes here also allows us to incorporate a range of writing practices into our definition of performance writing and places performance writing within a lineage of writing and performance practices. This is illustrated through an analysis of performance writing by Alison Knowles, Adrian Piper and Wrights and Sites.

The current writing available offers multiple interpretations of what performance writing is, but we found there is no clear definition of what this is and how it can be identified. This is a testament to the very nature of experimentation that is associated with practices of performance writing. This is reflected further through the artists that

we have chosen to discuss in this chapter in relation to performance writing, each of whom speaks across the specific subfields that we have identified. Alison Knowles, Wrights and Sites and Adrian Piper all help us articulate the characteristics of performance writing, sited score-based performance and object based contemporary art, demonstrating the ways in which these subfields are both distinctive and overlapping. These artists enable us to discuss performance scores as a mode of performance writing, and the ways this might be interacted with, performance writing devising strategies, and object-oriented writing through the production of ephemera.

The understandings arrived at through this chapter were in conjunction with the development of *House Box*, the first practice developed as part of this research. Chapter One reflects on the subject of *House Box* as it relates to our autoethnographic experience as millennials of housing precarity and shared renting. Chapter Two considers *House Box* through its textuality as performance writing.

### ***Roots and Definitions of Performance Writing***

The documented history of performance writing has lots of gaps in it, therefore it is difficult to find a clear understanding of where exactly the practice originated. However it was formally solidified into a field of academic study at Dartington College of Arts<sup>20</sup> (Devon, UK) in the 1990s. Ric Allsopp traces the roots back to Black Mountain College<sup>21</sup> (North Carolina, USA) noting that, 'in 1952, the poet and then

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<sup>20</sup> A specialist arts college that closed in 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Black Mountain College was a private liberal arts college that had at its centre the importance of arts practices in the support of teaching other subjects, it had a radical approach to education, as 'there were no letter grades at Black Mountain College, nor were there required courses, set curricula, standard examinations, or prescribed teaching methods. The responsibility of education resided with the students' (Erickson, 2015: 77). Faculty and students were also responsible for the management

dean of Black Mountain College, Charles Olson, wrote a course description titled *The Act of Writing in the Context of Post-Modern Man* (1999: 78). The course was an inspiration for the Performance Writing BA (Hons) programme at Dartington, with two key components of Olson's course description being highlighted by Allsopp; '(i) "acts of writing" which clearly places writing as engaged in physical process, which leads to '(ii) a "kinetics of experience" – the literal "movement of material" or "performance of writing" that is found and materialized' (1999: 78). The connection to the materiality of language in poetry is especially important, with many of the faculty at Dartington College of Arts having come from backgrounds of studying and practicing poetry and poetics including Caroline Bergvall, Anya Lewin and John Hall amongst others.

Whilst the history of performance writing is connected to the writing of poetry, especially in relation to American language poets (as highlighted through the connection to Black Mountain College), it is important to make distinctions between 'performance poetry' and 'performance writing'. The American poet-academic David Buuck discusses this:

I use the term "performance writing" here to try to generally indicate forms of experimental writing that work with/in/out of performance, and to distinguish such forms from emphasis on "performance poetry" (slam, spoken word, etc.) or performance art practices that are not driven by non-narrative and/or avant-garde poetics (Buuck, 2013).

Although our entry point is performance rather than poetry, Buuck's definition of performance writing aligns with our own in this project.

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and upkeep of the college with tasks including cooking, cleaning, gardening, and laundry. The college closed in 1957.



Performance writing at Dartington College of Arts explored the relationship of writing to performance. John Hall identified there were five 'modes': 'Live, Visual, Sonic, Digital and Page-based' (2018: 12) these 'modes' highlight a multidisciplinary approach. Caroline Bergvall notes, 'The textual does not only throw up the question of the literary, it also urgently prompts an interrogation of the impact the use of writing applies on visual, sonic or movement arts: and vice-versa' (1996: 1). Defining the field of performance writing seems purposefully slippery, and the holes in the history add to the potential for multiple definitions. Bergvall opened the first Symposium of Performance Writing at Dartington College of Arts in 1996 with the keynote address asking: 'What is performance writing? I think that's a good starting point so let's do a Gertrude Stein on it and talk about it for what it is not' (1996: 1). Gertrude Stein was an American modernist novelist, poet, and art collector who was well known for her use of mixing fantasy with life; she wrote a quasi-memoir in the voice of her partner Alice B Toklas (Academy of American Poets, no date). One of her most famous quotes and titles of a book was, 'rose is a rose is a rose is a rose' for which she never gave any explanation of its meaning. This slipping and sliding away from definition is the comparison that Bergvall is drawing between performance writing and Stein. This is also echoed by Ric Allsopp when he stated in 1999 that performance writing is '[s]till an unstable term that attempts to hold in tension both writing as its performance and performance as its writing' (1999: 77). The instability of performance writing continues to be one of its key qualities; this is evident through the broad range of practices that it has been employed to include – for example, visual poetry, experimental writing, event scores, sound recording and work that might understand site as a form of text.

'Performance writing is the continuing and transforming relationship between the two terms of its discourse, proposed both as boundary markers and as two points in an open circuit across which the luminous arc of performance writings come from' (Allsopp, 1999: 77). Performance writing asks questions about both the status of performance and of writing (we return to this later on in this chapter); it highlights their differences and their similarities. It allows for play and for risk taking. It is open to interpretation and open to misreading. Della Pollock offers a definition that sees the pushing of language and writing beyond itself, 'challenging the boundaries of reflexive textualities; relieving writing of its obligation under the name of "textuality", snapping, shifting, testing language. Practising language. Performing writing. Writing performatively' (Pollock, 1998: 75). If we consider performativity to be associated with words that have the power to bring about change (under specific circumstances and settings), in that a word leads to an action (for example, in the statements declaring "I do" (Austin, 2018: 5) in a marriage ceremony or "I now pronounce you man and wife", the words perform an action that transform the state of the person(s) being referred to or the subject making the declaration), a further example offered by Austin is "I name this ship *Queen Elizabeth*" (2018: 5) then writing performativity becomes the space of potentiality of something to come into being. Language philosopher J.L Austin first defined this as a 'performative utterance' noting that, 'the uttering of the words is, indeed, usually a, or even *the*, leading incident in the performance of the act, the performance of which is also the object of the utterance, but it is far from being usually, even if it is ever, *sole* thing necessary if the act is to be deemed to have performed' (2018: 8, original emphasis). Performativity is the connection between the utterance's suggestions and the action that then leads on

from them (in the example above, declaring “I do” transforms the speaker to a different state; from legally single to married).

In a 2018 issue of *Performance Research* on text and performance, several articles address the question of the definition of performance writing. We focus on the following two as they highlight specific points of departure we wish to explore in the analysis of our own work. In her article ‘In Praise of Doubt’, Lynley Edmeades offers that performance writing:

is, in and of itself an act of rebellion – it pushes against otherwise secure frameworks of interpretation (performance, installation or publication for example) to maintain its place outside these very frameworks. That is, performance writing relies on these frameworks to be otherwise. (2018: 61)

Edmeades builds a relationship between performance writing and sound studies in which doubt becomes a central aspect, paying particular attention to John Hall’s use of the term ‘emergence’. In using this term, she says, ‘Hall signals here to a fluid and incipient space in which the “world” is coming into being’ (2018: 62). Edmeades suggests that performance writing exists through its interaction; through the act of reading or writing, ‘[t]he focus is not, as he [Hall] says, on conservation of a preconceived “canon” or category of interpretation; rather the application of thought is directed at the world as a state of emergence as it comes into being’ (2018: 62). This is placed in relation to the history of score writing within sound studies with John Cage being a central example.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> John Cage (1912-1992) was an avant-garde composer whose work is often understood as relating to minimalism. ‘Perhaps best known for his work 4’33, which is performed in the absence of deliberate sound; artists who perform the work do nothing but be present for the duration specified by the title’ (Tate, nd).

Theron Schmidt's 'How We Talk About The Work *Is* The Work' (2018) focuses on critical writing as a performative act. He draws on distinctions made by Bergvall, Pollock and Hall in defining performance writing, stating:

as a propositional term "performance writing" invites writing that interrogates the way in which meaning is assembled: the presentation of the text as textuality, its texture and weft; its relation to authority (claimed or abdicated); and the interviewing of self-reflection on the act of writing itself. (2018: 37)

Much of his paper is spent describing the act of critical writing about live performance as a performance event. He makes several points that draw on John Hall's writing about the page as a site for performance and how we might 'pass through a page' (Hall, 2014: 17-19). Bringing to the fore the spatiality of the page, '[w]e can think about pages as spaces, and we can think of spaces as shaped by encounter' (Schmidt, 2018: 40). Schmidt draws on statements made by the geographer, Doreen Massey, to highlight the relationship between page and place, 'places as an ever-shifting constellation of trajectories poses the question of togetherness... These temporary constellations of trajectories, these events which are places, require negotiation' (Massey in Schmidt, 2018: 40). This highlights performance writing's potentiality to transport readers from one place to another and the ability to bring those readers into worlds of our own making, through the words on the page and their imaginations. It also foregrounds the complex relationship between text and reader – in particular, the journey of interpretation between the two.

### *What is performance?*

In the introduction to this thesis, we explained how this research project sits within the subfields of performance writing, object-oriented contemporary art and sited score-based performance. As such it asks questions about what performance is and

what performance can be, where it exists, how it can be used to make sense of and interrogate cultural and political positions, behaviours, practices as well as artistic forms and expressions. In some senses performance studies might be articulated as precarious, it avoids definitions, means different things to different scholars, it is not rigid. Within this field, Richard Schechner states that, 'performance means: never for the first time. It means for the second to the nth time'; it is 'twice-behaved behaviour' (2002: 22). He explains that to perform can be understood as "being" which is existence itself, "doing" that is the activity of all that exists... "showing doing" is performing: pointing to, underlining, and displaying doing. "Explaining showing doing" is the work of performance studies' (2002: 22). Having the ability to analyse something as performance (explaining showing-doing) is central to a performance studies methodology. Schechner explains that there is a distinction between that which "is" performance and that which can be analysed 'as' performance. He states 'what is the difference between "is" performance and "as" performance? Certain events are performance and others less so. There are limits to what "is" performance. But just about anything can be studied as performance' (2022: 30). He goes on to explain that what "is" performance can mean different things at different times, depending on cultures, environments etc. Performance is bound up to specific codes, but we can say for example that (in our own culture) performance art, theatre, dance, a musical production "is" performance and that an election is not a performance but can be understood and analysed "as" one.

Diana Taylor, building on the work of Elin Diamond (professor of English), suggests that a doing/done lens might be useful in helping us to understand performance. She suggests that, 'doing captures the *now* of performance, always and only a living

practice in the moment of its activation' (2016: 7) and that this allows us to think of performance as a process. She goes on to explain that:

It is also a thing done, an *object* or *product* or accomplishment. In this sense, performance might be experienced or evaluated at some different time. It might be collected by museums, or preserved in archives. Artists, too, may choose to perform in front of an archival video of their work to emphasize changes and continuity between then and now. (Taylor, 2016: 9)

This frame is important in thinking about the ontology of performance; how, where, and for how long it might live and continue to perform. Although performance is predominantly a bodily practice, this does not mean that the bodies need to be present in a moment of interaction. An image or a text may perform without having the artist's body present.

Along similar lines, Roberta Mock offers an important distinction between 'live performance' and 'performance' noting that 'a "performance" in the broadest sense is the (re)presentation or documentation of a series of events which may, or may not, still be in the process of occurring' (2000: 3). This might be understood as the 'done' frame in the model above. An example that Mock offers is around the performance of actors on screen or film. On the other hand, a "live performance" 'is one that is still happening and must happen. It includes the potential for change in its every moment of its delivery through the dialectic processes which *need* to be experienced (to more or lesser degrees) (2000: 3). This may be attributed to the 'doing' in Taylor's model where performance can be understood as a process.

The framing and designation of performance is central to it being understood as such; as Taylor asserts, 'each performance takes place in a designated space and

time. A soccer game is a demarcated act (with a start and end time, a defined space, with rules, and a referee to enforce them). A political protest, too, has a beginning and end, and distinguishes itself from other cultural practices' (2016: 17). This makes clear the fundamental need for performance to be a demarcated act that is framed as separate to other aspects of daily life, but it is important to highlight that this may be a subtle frame that perhaps only the performer knows about at the time; this may be done to challenge or intervene in a particular environment that is then revealed after the fact. This frame may also extend beyond the limits of a performance space of a theatre event, for example.

Perhaps the most significant thing for us to highlight comes from Taylor: performance is 'neither good nor bad, liberating or repressive, performance is radically unstable, dependent totally on its framing, on the *by whom* and *for whom*, on the why where when it comes into being' (2016: 41, original emphasis). This builds the basis of our definition of performance, as well as Mock's understanding of the difference between live performance and performance. We highlight here the crucialness of the framing and context as what defines performance.

### *What is writing?*

Reminiscent of performance, writing is both making and something that has been made (a verb and a noun). The latter relates to a text whereby symbols are assigned meanings that translate information (such as language) into physical form (the completed piece of writing). These are usually shared cultural meanings that can be understood by different readers. The symbols themselves do not matter as much as their agreed upon meanings – but outside of those meanings, the alphabet (for

example) is essentially arbitrary. However, this description means that multiple types of text are, for us, classified as being part of an expanded field of writing practices, and we take this into our definition of performance writing. For example, a score is the textual outcome of the process of writing an instruction or directive that relates to a performance action. There is an implied need for what is read to be activated and acted upon (even if this is just through the process of thinking about what the response may be). In a performance score the action (or imagined action) is translated into words and appears on the page as words. This then becomes a performance text. Later in the chapter we will discuss Fluxus event scores.

To offer an example of a text that is not the same as writing, a map uses symbols to translate geographic information into textual information. Someone's understanding of the symbols might be aided by a key (a section of the map that explains what the different symbols mean), and some symbols might be more accessible because they have pictorial qualities that have been assigned cultural meaning (for example, a cross on a rectangle represents a type of church on Ordnance Survey maps). These different types of texts have the potential to be used within performance writing because of the expanded understanding of what both of the two terms can involve. It is possible that text is the thing produced through the act of writing, and performance writing always produces texts that are both doing, and things done.

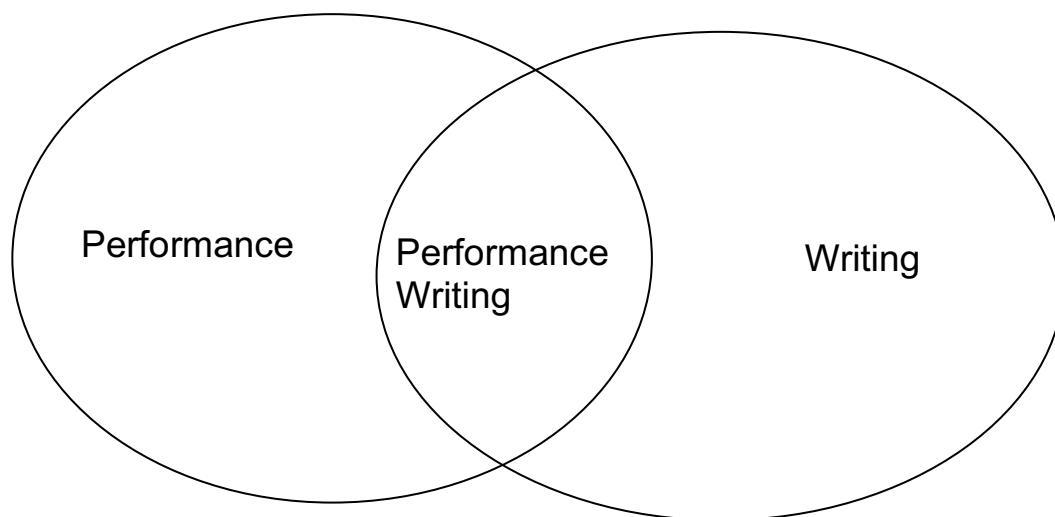


Performance writing is an artistic practice that brings together both performance and writing.

We define performance in this context as action that is specifically framed and separated from other 'daily' actions – for example, a walk is a performance once it is framed and separated from the everyday continuation of space-time relations; with performance studies the significance is in the intention of how it is analysed as performance.

We define writing as language that is translated onto a page using the alphabet – the alphabet is a set of symbols that have cultural meaning. The outcome of writing is a text, there are many different kinds of texts.

Performance writing is the coming together of both practices (although the limits and definitions can be stretched and challenged), where the parameters of these definitions are understood as opportunities and not positioned as binaries. As such, we understand that other kinds of texts may exist in relation to writing within a performance writing practice.



**Figure 2.1: Diagram defining performance writing.**

Because of the dual nature of performance writing, as being both performance and writing, those who engage with it (but who are not the makers) are both readers and audience members. We therefore use reader-audience to refer to those who connect with our work. An audience can be the group of people that you intend to reach with your writing, but they are also those who witness a performance, a reader is an individual (or a person who is part of a target or intended audience) who reads the

words you write. As texts exist in many forms, a reader may not be a sufficient term to describe those who interact with it, and audience may be too broad a term as they might not belong to a group.

### ***Barthes and Textuality***

Textuality is the study of the specific qualities that make up a certain kind of text. The textuality of a map for example, is based upon providing locations, reflecting borders (through various sized lines), demonstrating routes, using symbols to highlight landmarks, reflecting scales, translating distances etc. Within literary theory, textuality is a practice where the text makes itself have meaning, through its interaction with a reader; the text is in a continual process of becoming (Silverman, 1986: 54). The text is never fixed, and there is always more that can be revealed about it. This is what makes the theory of text and textuality crucial for a definition of performance writing. Roland Barthes (1915-1980) was a literary theorist, philosopher, critic, and semiotician who lived and worked in Paris at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* and then later at the *Collège de France*. In *The Death of The Author* (1967), he declared that the concept of the author was dead, and that this would lead to the birth of the reader. There had been a shift from who and where meaning was made through literature (and this also extended to other forms of texts including artworks, films etc) and this was connected to systems of signs. His work is especially important to this research project and to our understanding of performance writing as throughout his career he developed a range of extended approaches to reading and writing. His development of the concept of a text moves away from the idea of a completed piece of writing. For Barthes a 'text' differs from a traditional 'work' in so much that a work places an emphasis on the

author, and a text re-positions the meaning-making onto the reader. As he explains, 'the text is experienced only in an activity of production. It follows that text cannot stop (for example on a library shelf); its constitutive movement is that of cutting across (in particular, it can cut across the work)' (Barthes, 1977: 157).

For Barthes, texts are 'put to work' through an interaction with a reader, they require some form of activation; as he explains, 'the text you write must prove it desires me' (Barthes, 1975: 6). By this he means that the text must find a way to work on its reader to make sure that they are attracted to the text. This is in keeping with an understanding of textuality whereby words are woven together and are made up of what Barthes describes as 'codes [that] create a kind of network, a *topos* through which the entire text passes (or rather, in passing becomes text)' (Barthes, 1990: 20). In *S/Z* (1990) Barthes defines the five semiotics codes that can be used to read a text, and these are meant as a way of seeing the text and as a method to understand. These codes are: hermeneutic (meaning which is present but hidden from the reader), proairetic (elements of action in the narrative that push the story forward), semantic (not clearly defined, as relates to connotations), symbolic (similar to the semantic code), and cultural (knowledge that exists outside of the texts, cultural knowledge) (Barthes, 1990: 18-19).

Barthes also articulates two overarching types of texts: the writerly, which is where the reader is required to unpack and develop meaning through their own interpretation using the system of codes that Barthes identifies; and the readerly which is the writerly's 'counter value, its negative, reactive value: what can be read, but not written' (1990: 4). The readerly is understood as texts that are easily

understood, where writerly texts are more complex to understand due to the semiotic codes being employed in such a way as to disrupt themselves, requiring some effort on the part of the reader. We characterise our performance writing as writerly – for example, the instructions that exist as part of *House Box* are not complete; how a reader may choose to utilise them is open and unknowable to us as the writers.

These understandings of text (and its relationship to performance and writing) allows us to include practices in this thesis which, although they might not have previously been identified as performance writing, can be comfortably absorbed into the open nature of its form and process. We position other text-based scoring processes as performance writing, which has roots in a range of earlier practices. The most explicit within this lineage are the event scores emerging from the Fluxus movement. Fluxus, like Dada before it,<sup>23</sup> offered no single style, but rather placed an emphasis on experimentation and collaboration.

### ***Alison Knowles and Fluxus Event Scores***

Alison Knowles is an American visual artist and one of the founding members of the Fluxus movement. Fluxus event scores:

date back to John Cage's famous class at The New School, where artists such as George Brecht, Allan Kaprow, and Alison Knowles began to create art works and performances in musical form. One of these forms was the event. Events tend to be scored in brief verbal notations. These notes are known as event scores. In a general sense, they are proposals, propositions, and instructions. Thus, they are sometimes known as proposal pieces, propositions, or instructions. (Friedman, Smith & Sawchyn, 2002: 2)

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<sup>23</sup> 'Born in the heart of Europe in the midst of World War I, Dada displayed a raucous scepticism about accepted values. Its embrace of new materials and methods created an abiding legacy for the century to come, with strategies that included collage, montage, assemblage, readymades, chance, performance, and new media pranks' (Dickerman, 2005: IX).

In 1962, Knowles moved away from her training as a fine artist and began writing scores, which have been collected into a bookwork called *Alison Knowles* (1965 / 2004). These scores take the form of seemingly simple instructions that are open to interpretation in terms of how they are staged (or if they are staged at all, instead left as imagined performance through reading). Examples include:

**#17** \_\_

**Color Music #1 (September, 1963) for Dick Higgins**

List your problems from one to five.

For each problem list the best solution you can think of.

For each problem also list a color.

Whenever the problem arises in your mind, think first of the best solution, and if you cannot act upon it immediately, switch to concentration on the color until an absolute necessity intervenes.

Premiered October, 1963 at 423 Broadway, New York. (Knowles, 2004:14)

In 'color music #1', we can see that the act of fulfilling the instruction, of making the list, and thinking about the answers to the questions offered can be considered as performance in its explicit framing. It is not clear if or not this was intended to take place in front of an audience – or if indeed it would be possible to do so. There is a sense of recalling and returning to the act, of coming back to the performance

moment and re-playing and re-remembering the answer to the questions that were given at the time. It is possible that when reading this instruction, the reader-audience member might choose to complete the instructions themselves, or they may choose to think about how others have interpreted the task – each is a performance, to return to Taylor, ‘performance might be experienced or evaluated at some different time’ (2016: 9). Performance as understood in relation to performance writing is dependent on how and when it is analysed as performance, and not how it is executed. The text performs even without the artist being present at its time of interaction.

The writing element of the score comes from the way that it communicates with the reader-audience, the score itself is a text. There were several categories of the Fluxus event score, including ‘the boxed score’ (simple instructions printed inside of a box, as seen in the examples above); ‘book or pamphlet collection’ of scores; and the ‘large scale collection’, that includes work by more than one artist that were collected in a neatly produced typeset (Friedman, Owen & Sawchyn, 2002: 2). The significance of the aesthetic quality of the text on the page is central to their production, where much consideration is given to the way that the writing performs on the page. It is possible to recognise a Fluxus event score as such as well as the individual artist’s style within that. Some of the scores (see image below) are very minimal in their instruction and embody the as / is of performance that Schechner articulates, but the way that they are constructed is aesthetically considered and allows them to be read as event scores (they are stylised in a way that is recognisable as such).

#2 \_\_

**Proposition (October, 1962)**

Make a salad.

Premiered October 21st, 1962 at Institute for Contemporary Arts in  
London

*Make a Salad* was most recently performed in February 2019 at the Fluxus Festival in Los Angeles. Making a salad is not performance, but under specific circumstances it is able to be framed and analysed as performance. This demonstrates and illustrates the way that performance can be understood and operates within performance writing practices. The 'performance' takes the form of a salad being prepared to music for many people, who then all eat it together. As a large quantity of salad is required, the preparation is unusual, utilising barrels and tarpaulin for tossing it. The work exists both as a performed action, and as a printed instruction, giving the initial score life beyond its first performance. The making of the salad can be distinguished as performance and the score as writing, once the two are brought together they (much like tossing a salad) become performance writing; that is, the making of the salad as performance lives on in the printed score and the written text lives on *in* the performance of making the salad. For us, this work exemplifies one of the key elements of performance writing: that is, the connection to quotidian practices that point to something wider – in this case, that is to community building and meditation in relation to problem solving. The work demonstrates a blurring of

life and art, which again further highlights the uses of framing as performance in performance writing (and performance studies more broadly).

### ***Adrian Piper and Propositions with Imagined Responses***

Adrian Piper is an American artist (now living and working in Berlin),<sup>24</sup> who has explored identity, race and gender. Her work straddles a range of practices including conceptual art, minimalism and performance, and incorporates text-based work, performances, installation, interventions, video work, and performance experiments. As Jörg Heiser states, this has included, ‘taking photographs determined by arbitrary time intervals to document her space-time location at home or on the street; stuffing a towel in her mouth and riding a bus; going to public places and events dressed up as a working-class man of color and muttering a mantra’ (2018: 11). Piper’s practice can also be understood as performance writing; for example, in her work *My Calling (Card) #2* (1986-90) she wrote a statement explaining that she was alone and not there to be picked up, the statements were printed onto business-card sized cards that were handed out when sitting alone at a bar (Costello, 2018: 177). Bringing together how the work is experienced through the writing and how the writing is distributed as a performance produces the space of performance writing. Put simply, the text on the cards is the writing, and the subsequent giving and connections with people around her is the performance, and they are inseparable in producing the form and meaning of the work. The *Calling Card* series are complex works where the artist categorises the two works as reactive guerrilla performances: “reactive” because they are responsive to specific acts of racism and sexism; “guerrilla”

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<sup>24</sup> Piper left America in 2005 and resurfaced in Berlin, refusing to return to America or explain why she left in the first place. She called this ‘Escape to Berlin: A Travel Memoir’.



because they are unannounced interventions (Costello, 2018: 177). Like the work of Knowles, there is a connection to the quotidian and a reflection on identity and community that is present in the artistic processes.

Similarly, in Piper's *The Probable Trust Registry*, which was first exhibited at the Elizabeth Dee Gallery in New York in 2014, performances are activated when reader-audiences interact with and respond to words. *The Probable Trust Registry* is an installation-exhibition that consists of three golden desks. As noted in the press release, the gallery was 'transformed into three corporate reception environments... Each reception area is fully staffed by a volunteer administrator who helps to execute personal declaration contracts to a self-selecting public' (Bass, 2014). Reader-audience members had a choice of three statements: 'I will always be too expensive to buy', 'I will always do what I say I am going to do', or 'I will always mean what I say'. These statements form the basis of a contract that reader-audiences may (or may not) sign. Upon arriving at one of three desks, reader-audience members are intended to enter into dialogue about the statement and what implications that statement might have for them. Although the three statements are short, they are open to interpretation and questioning. As reviewer Chloe Bass noted, '[t]hey leave room for questions that only the volunteer staffers... can answer. The visitor can only get more information through participation' (Bass, 2014). The nature of this work means that these questions may never be able to be answered. Although the artist is not physically present, the reader-audience member does meet other people; although their role may be minimal and somewhat secondary; or pivotal to their experience, it is the words that allow for the performance to be accessed. The performance exists in the reader-audience member's mind. As Roberta Mock

explained to us five years later, her interaction with the work at Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin in 2017 left her thinking about her responses and the choices that she made long after leaving the exhibition. She described how the text and the performance were explicitly tied together and how this was impactful for her. The work created a space of potentiality, where ethics and values could be considered and thought through and lingered long after the exhibition was encountered. This distance between the work and the artist resonates with how we approach our own work, as well as the performance being imagined and not live (from our personal email correspondence with Roberta Mock 30th May 2022).

The language Piper used offers a space for interpretation, and for reader-audience members to think about their own conditions and the things that they may want to change about the world that they live in. What seems a simple participatory action quickly becomes a complex and philosophical experience that challenges participants to take themselves out of their comfort zones and to think through what they are willing to do to change in regard to specific aspects of their lives as they connect to the questions posed. The artist refers to these contractual statements as 'rules of the game', suggesting much more is at play here. For example, do participants allow their contracts to affect their everyday lives, or choose to simply forget them after leaving the exhibition? After signing, participants are given a copy of their contract, but their contract forms a part of a bigger repository with the contracts of other people. By doing this, Piper places the participants in relation to each other. The contracts stop being just personal and also become social; if you let yourself down, you are also letting down the others who you are contractually tied to. This demonstrates one way that writing and performance collide, as a contract is a

performative, that is an agreement that the person who signs will perform. The performances here are individual and specific to each participant because everybody's answers to the questions will be different. The writing allows the performance to continue to exist beyond the moment, but there is also a requirement for the writing to exist within the moment. The exhibition becomes the initial frame for the performance, and the reader-audience member is aware that they are entering into an artistic action; the writing allows for the 'rules' of this interaction to be communicated.

### ***Wrights & Sites: Mapping***

Wrights & Sites are a group of four artist-academics; Cathy Turner, Stephen Hodge, Simon Persighetti and Phil Smith, based in the UK. They create sited performance interventions in the form of alternative walking strategies. These often consist of performance scores and instructions. Their *Mis-Guides* (*An Exeter Mis-Guide* [2003], *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* [2006]) are intended to produce a series of performance interventions. *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* (2006) 'is a utopian project for the recasting of a bitter world by disrupted walking. Mis-Guides are your travel documents for your destination less journeys' (Wrights & Sites, 2006: 116). Sarah Rosenbaum compares the process of mapping (a broadly defined practice of exploring and documenting space) and remapping to Paul Cezanne's approach to painting as a chess game where the canvas informs the world, and the world informs the canvas. She explains that 'as we walk through a terrain with a map as a guide, a similar thing happens: the terrain is redefined by our reading of the map, and we see the map differently by having experienced the terrain' (2001: 54). This is also how performance writing is understood, both impacting and reflecting on each other, and is the approach used

as an explorative tactic in the Mis-Guides. These include clearly stated tasks, such as '[s]ome commercial mapmakers draw non-existent streets onto their maps, so they can tell if their maps have been plagiarised. Invent a new street map. Pass your maps around' (2006: 85) – as well as more nuanced suggestions such as searching for wormholes<sup>25</sup> to take you to other places (2006: 84). We make a distinction here between 'maps' as a form of text, something that is recognisable through a series of symbols and signs that have culturally ascribed meanings, to mapping which we understand as a performance (in the context of Wrights & Sites, although their maps are also texts). What is always the case however, is their desire to explore place differently, to see the overlooked. Kris Darby notes that, 'Wrights & Sites bring only themselves and other drifters to the site, sometimes with the inclusion of a "toolkit". This toolkit highlights further the sense of impermanence in their walking [...] Their raw material is the drift itself' (2013: 54). The artists do not want to alter the space in which they are exploring, unlike some site-specific work.<sup>26</sup>

The Mis-Guides demonstrate further characteristics of performance writing. Re-mapping becomes a process of performing and thinking through local myths and histories. The scores are the sites of performance (and they are also writing), the readers-audience members might imagine themselves out on the street, or they might physically use the Mis-guides to go out onto the street and explore. But they also function as writing (they are written on the page), as in the example: '[I]ook for the writing on the city – on posters, on rubbish, graffiti, conversations... use this text to rename the streets' (Wrights & Sites, 2006: 79). The instructions are collected in a

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<sup>25</sup> A wormhole is a scientific loophole in space-time that links one place to another.

<sup>26</sup> In Chapter Six, we also utilise walking within our performance writing practice.

small book that resembles a 'handbook' or a 'pocket' sized A to Z: the pages are spiral bound and there is a plastic cover protecting both the front and back pages, their material quality means that they feel and look useable, the plastic cover means that the guides are waterproof and seem to invite being taken outside.

### ***House Box***

We have discussed the above artists and focused on specific aspects of their practice – Alison Knowles and performance scores, Adrian Piper and instructions with imagined outcomes, Wrights & Sites and mapping – because these modes are also present in our own performance writing. We will now return to the practice introduced in Chapter One and apply these understandings about the forms and modes of performance writing to our own practice.



**Figure 2.2, *House Box* opened and separated out. Image Credit: Rosy Whittemore.**

*House Box* is a series of performance writings that sit within a small stainless-steel box, held together by a bright orange band (see Figure 0.2). There are two editions of this work: the original first series, and a second 'party edition'. *House Box* began as a process of experimenting. We set out to stay in various shared spaces of the house that we shared with others for periods of twenty-four hours, and to chart how we felt about these spaces, what we observed, and how we understood our relationship to these shared spaces. To do this, we made notes, and these notes then became the performance writing that comprises *House Box*. The box (see Figure 2.2) was found in a section of IKEA (small storage) we now refer to as the performance aisle. It is important to note the significance of IKEA as the site of purchase for its relationship to mass-produced flat-pack furniture; walking around the store becomes a game of "if I had a house I would want it to look like this". We chose the box for its aesthetic appeal. It appears to have a function, partitioned within and containing another smaller tin, allowing three sections in total, but its original intended purpose is ambiguous. It is approximately 17 cm long, 9 cm wide and 8 cm high. We have utilised this interior space as follows: the top section contains larger introductory cards; the smaller inner section has an MP3 player and earphones; and the deeper internal section houses the series of event score cards we have made.



**Figure 2.3: contents of *House Box*. Image credit: Rosy Whittemore.**

The contents of the first iteration of *House Box* (see Figure 2.3) is a collection of scores, observations, maps and an audio tour. The larger instruction cards provide some context to how the contents were devised, and a guide to listening to the audio tour:

**'Instructions'**

**'We have described nine spaces in our house.**

**Please listen to each audio file in the equivalent space in your house, or as near to this as you can manage.'**

**'Spend 24 hours in the living room'**

**'Spend 24 hours in the corridors'**

**'Spend 24 hours in the kitchen'**

The instruction to spend 24 hours in a particular space is not necessarily intended as a literal invitation, but rather, to point to the making process and offer an approach to using it as performance. It reads like a Fluxus event score and demonstrates one way the writing operates. The scores do not need to be interacted with in any order, and the reader-audience member is free to construct their own version of the set of cards (and more broadly choose the way that they interact with the other components of the whole box). *House Box* may become a game where the order or the action (imagined or otherwise) is performed as structured and engaged with. The other smaller cards are either scores written for specific rooms for other people to choose to play with in their own environments or are details specific to the moment of shared living in which they were made – for example, observations or maps of fleeting circumstances such as the number of people vying for space in the kitchen.

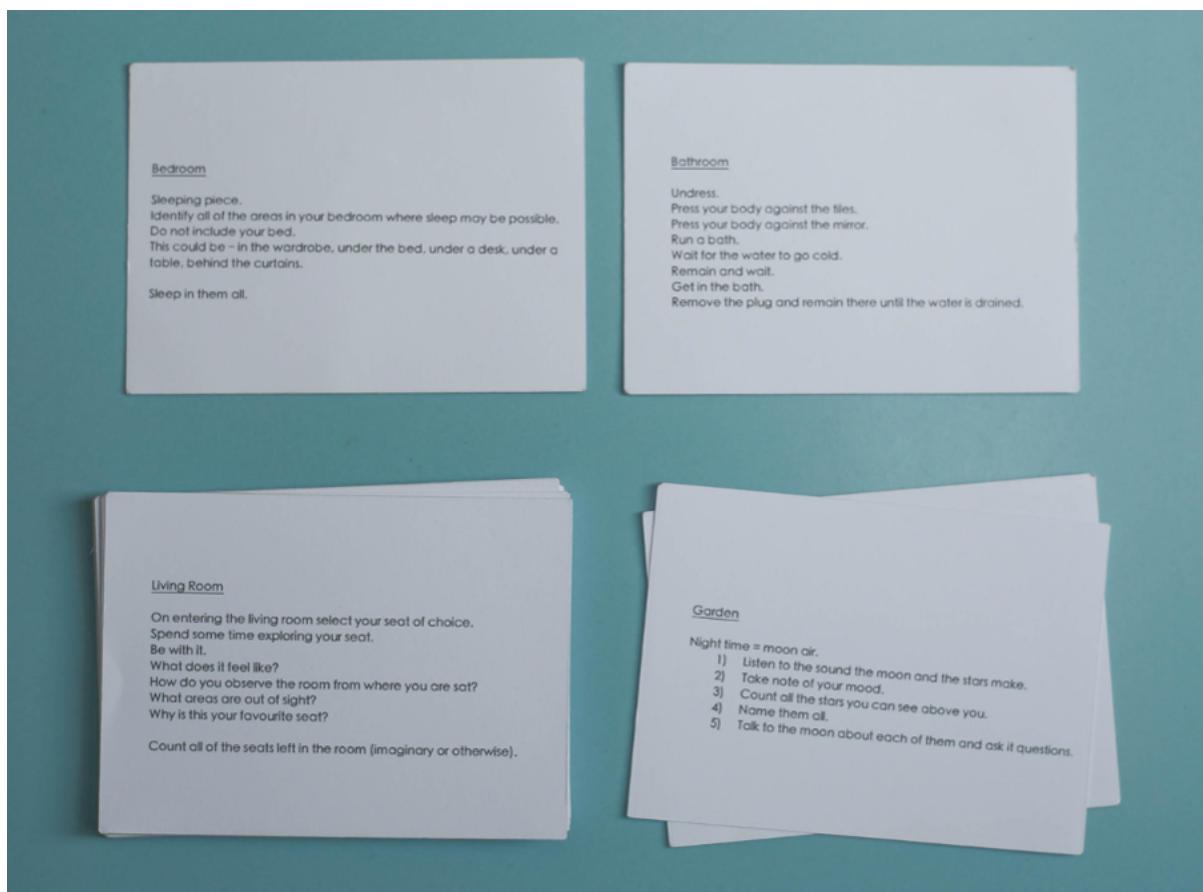


Figure 2.4: scores of *House Box*. Image credit: Rosy Whittemore.



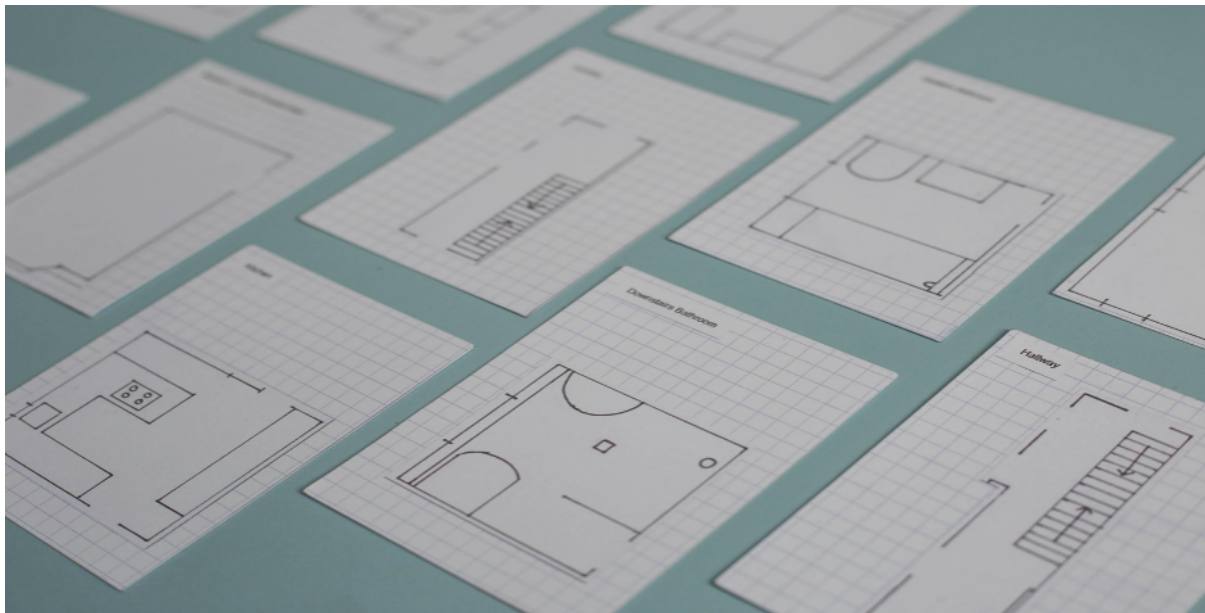
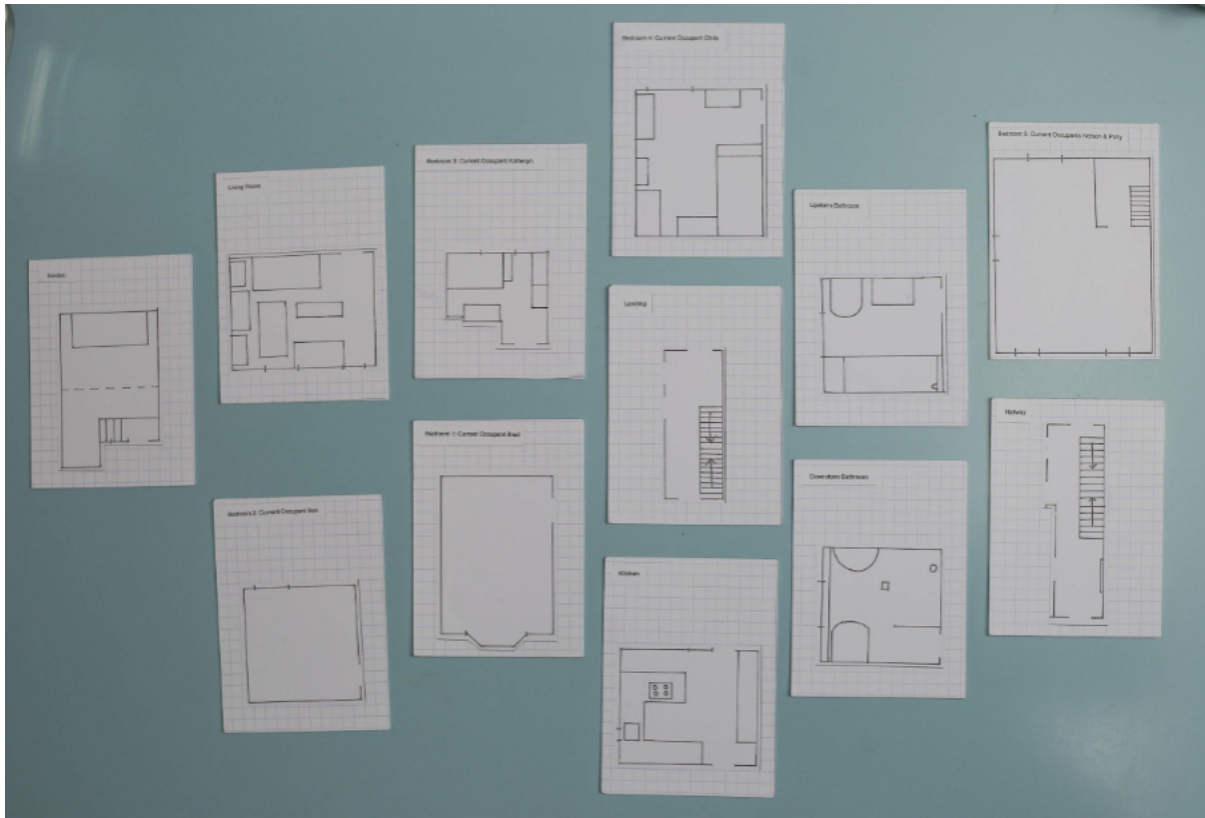
As shown in Figure 2.4, the cards demonstrate a way to connect to a specific room, but they may also offer the reader-audience member a way to access 'our house' rather than their own. Each score is slightly different in nature, and this is in part a way for us to process our understanding of a specific place through writing. The bedroom card relates to an attempt to rest or to be restful, it invites the reader-audience member to find all of the places that are not their bed where they could sleep. The bathroom invites a level of intimacy and being naked. The living room suggests a certain amount of play, in a space that is often occupied by others or with others, and where a certain level of negotiation needs to take place. The garden score is somewhat more open and less straightforward and it reads:

### Garden

Night time = moon air.

- 1) Listen to the sound the moon and the stars make.
- 2) Take note of your mood.
- 3) Count all of the stars you can see above you.
- 4) Name them all.
- 5) Talk to the moon about each of them and ask it questions.

The scores are performed by reader-audience members once they are interacted with (either imagined responses or by actually enacting the instructions). This is a two-way process – as makers, we have performed the work by imagining how others may choose to interact with the scores, as well as performing them through the making process.



**Figure 2.5 and 2.6: maps of *House Box*. Image credit: Rosy Whittemore.**

The box in its entirety is an assemblage, in that it is comprised of component parts,<sup>27</sup> and represents our personal experiences of the house that we shared together with

<sup>27</sup> We build upon the notion of an assemblage of performance writing in both Chapters Three and Five

four others (a total of six including the two of us) in South Manchester. These maps are crudely hand drawn (see Figures 2.5 and 2.6) and are labelled (e.g., 'Kitchen', 'Ben's Bedroom' etc.) The extent of each map's detail is dependent on what knowledge or access we had of that space; this means that shared spaces or our own rooms are detailed, and housemates' bedrooms are just walls. Some tenants were a lot more private than others, and this tended to fluctuate depending on the evolving relationships of housemates. For instance, as close friends, we came and went from each other's bedrooms freely at all hours whether the other was in or not, and we were comfortable with this (although there was still a sense of respecting each other's privacy). Some housemates though kept their door locked and shut if they weren't in the room and were much more comfortable with a separation between shared and private spaces.

Maps are examples of borders, marking where one place begins and one ends. For Richard Schechner, maps are 'a "projection", a specific way of representing a sphere on a flat surface. On maps, nations do not overlap or share territories. Boundaries are definite' (2002: 41). The subversion of maps in the work of Wrights & Sites is politically significant as a push back against border making and reinforcement, and links to their focus on subjectivity within a specific community. For us, the maps of the house are our personal understandings of that space; they do not represent the experiences of the other inhabitants, only our own. Because of this, the maps become a ghost of our lives lived within that space. The central points of a map (doors, windows, furniture) become markers of navigation.



**Figure 2.7: MP3 player. Image credit: Rosy Whittemore.**

The final part of *House Box* is a voice recorded audio tour on an MP3 player (see Figure 2.7) of a walk round our house, starting from the front door, moving through each room that we had access to, where we talk a little about our relationship to that space. We describe our memories, how we use the space, how we interact with others there, and observations about things that did not work properly. It was an improvised performance. Every dwelling will have quirks that the residents get used to, that guests or newcomers will not be familiar with. These quirks are incorporated into how you move around the dwelling – for example, a door lock that needs jiggling in a particular way to open, or an oven knob that one must always turn a little further to the right than the numbers indicate to reach the required temperature. All the spaces we have lived in have these eccentricities that, when you are familiar with them, you instinctively respond to. Homes experience wear and tear at different

rates, and something might be minor enough to live with rather than fix or replace, and responding to that becomes part of how we navigate our homes, without conscious thought. Making the audio recording, it was our intention that others would listen in the corresponding rooms of their own house. If the listener moves about the corresponding rooms in their house as they listen to us walk through ours, then they are placed in these two environments at once, and our description of our relationship to the space invites reflection on their own space. The maps we have created can be placed over maps of the locations that they are being interacted in, maps on top of maps, that created new and playful ways of exploring locationality.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have deepened an understanding of what performance writing is and how it can be identified. We have described performance writing as an artistic practice that combines both performance and writing. Writing and performance exist in performance writing to varying degrees, and they may challenge and push the boundaries of the meanings and characteristics of both.

Key concepts discussed in this chapter that are significant in relation to our practice are:

- Scores – The written score is a text to be performed (imagined or in reality). Alison Knowles' scores, like *Make a Salad*, demonstrate how they are both performances and writing in different moments. Scoring is the process in which a score is written. Writing is the process of translating thoughts into language, these then become a text. Texts are not limited to writing, however,

and a text can take on many different forms for example paintings, films, sheet music, sculptures can all be categorised as texts.

- Maps and mapping – Maps are texts designed to be decoded and understood as they contain culturally understood symbols. Artists like Wrights & Sites map spatio-temporal landscapes through alternative means, although some of their work does use these same symbols. They often use words and instructions in order to guide uses of the maps.
- Reader-audience members – Because of the hybrid nature of the role of performance writing we have chosen to describe those who interact with the work as reader-audience members. Adrian Piper’s work demonstrates how performance writing connects to those who engage with it.

In addition to the above, we have identified auditory components to present and encounter performance writing. Our *House Box* offers an audio component that is another way of mapping, as it takes the reader-audience on a tour of a house.

Scores, maps, and audio tours are forms of performance writing (or texts that performance writing might constitute) that we use within our work. The use of reader-audience members, however, is central to how we define performance writing as an artistic practice that brings together both performance and writing and therefore requires a hybrid mode of encounter. Performance writing offers an opportunity to extend the potential and boundaries of both performance and writing; of how they may behave and what they may achieve. Performance writing may or may not

incorporate elements of liveness, but it is not predicated on needing to be live or have a bodily presence. We will apply this definition to our performance writing throughout this thesis and specify its qualities and characteristics in the analysis of the objects we make, and the significance of objects in our practice.

This chapter contributes towards the first aim, specifically to develop a method of performance writing, and provides grounding for the second aim, to define the use value of performance writing within this interrogation. It does this by drawing on different creative writing art practices to consider what the characteristics of performance writing might be. These characteristics aid us in placing this research in its subfields. The artists highlighted here demonstrate a tension between these subfields in that they are unstable and share qualities with one another (both the artists' work and the subfields we derive from them). These understandings are analysed through and applied to *House Box*, which through its devising contributes to the question concerning how our autoethnographic process develops performance writing, and in what ways may this be useful for other artists. Its usefulness comes through offering a definition of performance writing, as well establishing the relationship between performance writing and a reader-audience in this practice.

### Chapter Three: Assemblages and Response to Domestic Precarity

This chapter builds on the definition of performance writing offered in Chapter Two by discussing how performance writing can operate as an assemblage. Within our own practice we refer to the assemblage as a noun — an artwork comprised of parts — and we suggest here that performance writing also acts as an assemblage in the theoretical sense as a series of relations (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 90-91). This conceptualisation enables us to begin discussing performance writing as material objects, and to introduce a sense of relationality between these agentic objects and their makers.

The materiality of *House Box* is analysed to suggest how making this work is an attempt to understand and counteract our housing precarity, through a discussion of thing-power (Vera List Centre, 2011). The chapter expands on the experience of housing precarity discussed in Chapter One; suggesting a home is a contested site of the public and private. We begin to consider here that this practice was an attempt to create a feeling of home and ownership through performance writing. The concept of hope is introduced, though discussed here in terms of the negative, through the concept of cruel optimism and its relationship to precarity (Berlant, 2011: 1).

This chapter considers the way that we live with others, and how the performance writing we have created draws on this experience, offering to others an opportunity to explore their own living conditions. We reflect upon the specific rhythms of the house share described in *House Box*. In his book *Performing Home* (2019) Stuart Andrews reflected on a period during which he had found himself temporarily living in



his mother's house with his sisters. He notes the way that practices of living became apparent:

Early in the day, we would open the blinds half-way in the dining area of an open plan kitchen-dining-sitting room. As the morning progressed, we would open them a little more, some of these practices were so familiar that we could do them without thinking – others were only known by one or two of us. In those days together, we thought and talked about these actions, aware they comprised a particular way of living in the house...We built up a new understanding of the house as a home. (Andrews, 2019: xiv)

These actions are described as a way of learning to live together, as home building even when a situation is temporary. There is a sense that both the people and the house itself collaborate to create that sense of home, to make those who live there *at home* through actions and ways of being in the environment. For us, through *House Box*, we are reflecting the ways that home building can happen in shared housing, through how the people who live together connect to each other. Shared housing has the potential to become a polis (a space of appearance, a political space) where we can know ourselves through and because of being seen by others, although at times this is at odds with what we want from a home. As a practice of being with others, *House Box* attempts to offer us, in making the work, ways through domestic precarity.

### ***Objects with Agency: House Box as Assemblage.***

In 2010, at the Sculpture and Performance conference held between the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds and Tate Liverpool, Pil and Galia Kollektiv presented the paper 'Can Objects Perform?' in which they explain:

Just as an economy of pure branding and no manufacturing has come under suspicion of late, so the dematerialization of art, once seen as an obstacle to its commoditization, drew criticism once it became clear that the absence of a physical object poses no real problem for the forces of the market. More

importantly, this dematerialization has been seen to contribute to the precarious labour practices that have become rife within the creative industry. (2010: 2)

Much of the power and draw of performance art in the 1960s and 1970s was based upon freeing the constraints from the traditional production and value of art; the fact that performance was temporary and supposedly unsellable was an effective means of communicating a desire for experimentation and to move into something new (that still belonged to a larger history of performance) and as a form of resistance (Carlos, 1998:12). This 'dematerialisation' was a way for artists to separate themselves from the making of objects, their bodies becoming the materials of their work. However, it is clear from Kollektiv and Kollektiv's statement above that this did not mean that the artists were freed from the mechanisms of the art market, rather, it just found a new way to exploit them. As our work communicates our experience of precarity, we often choose to make something that physically persists as a form of resistance (so rather than dematerialisation, this becomes a process of [re]materialisation). *House Box* is likened to a house brick, it looks a similar shape to one (although made of metal), it has a sense of permanence to it, even when the material qualities of the cards inside are less durable. We could imagine burying it and returning to it in years to come to explore how we used to live, it is a kind of time capsule perhaps.

Jane Bennett (2011) discusses the phenomenology of hoarding as a coping mechanism for the uncertainty of the world. In her analysis of hoarders she describes objects as having agency; those who hoard are experiencing objects in a way that means the objects make themselves stay; the hoarder is not choosing to keep the objects. Bennett explains it is the objects that have the control over the hoarder and therefore create a negative impact on the hoarder's experience of the

world. There appears to be a relationship between the hoarder and their experience of precarity; most people identify a particular moment of uncertainty or change in their lives when they started their hoards (Bennett, 2011). There is clearly something complex taking place between the object and the individual, perhaps the hoarding is a way of creating permanence and stability, or maybe it is a way of detaching responsibility and functions as a means of transferral where the hoard becomes the thing holding an individual back and thus stopping them from dealing with a life event or issues (for example, but each case is different). This also relates to practices of minimalism<sup>28</sup> (as an interior design style that emphasises a lack of objects and clutter in living spaces. This can be a stylistic choice or an attempt to use less and live without excess in the home), and although this is an impulse to live without objects rather than trying to live with too many, both are about control. For Bennett, the slowing down of life that occurs as a result of hoarding is a coping response to our own mortality; things last longer than human flesh, and at least *something* does not die (Bennett, 2011). We might compare this to our desire to make objects; we created something that mimicked the materiality of a house brick, something permanent that does not disappear.

We refer throughout this thesis to a dual meaning of assemblages: as an arts practice (art works constructed of parts, series or collections and that have the potential to be remade in different configurations) and as a philosophical concept (similarly, that things are constructed of parts and are not whole, and thus nothing is fixed or has stable meaning). *House Box* is formed of component parts: the cards and how the different cards function, the audio tour, its container. However, as an

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<sup>28</sup> Minimalism is also an artistic style or genre (visual or music) however we are not referring to this here.

assemblage this work potentially fosters political activity by forming meaning in the relationships between parts.

An assemblage is a collection of relations, between bodies, concepts, structures (for example) and the potential for what actions those different relations can have. Using language as an example (though this also applies to actions that aren't an utterance), Deleuze and Guattari explain:

The assemblages are in constant variation, are themselves constantly subject to transformations. First, the circumstances must be taken into account... a performative statement is nothing outside of the circumstances that make it performative... The general term "circumstances" should not leave the impression that it is a question only of external circumstances. "I swear" is not the same when said in the family, at school, in a love affair, in a secret society, or in court: it is not the same thing, and neither is it the same statement; it is not the same bodily situation, and neither is it the same incorporeal transformant. (2004: 90-91)

These performative statements form different meanings given the bodies that they act upon and the other 'circumstances' they are in a relation to. On the one hand, meaning is in the relation between the different components of an artwork, but also meaning is located in all aspects of who or what is in a relation in any moment in time with the artwork, be it non-human or human, tangible or not.

In trying to understand object power's relationship to humans, Bennett draws on Deleuze and Guattari's theory of assemblages, which, 'are ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts' (Bennett, 2010: 23). Deleuze and Guattari use the theory of assemblages to understand the human as a continual becoming. Bennett describes this inter-connected continual collaboration as a kind of thing-power:

If matter itself is lively, then not only is the difference between subjects and objects minimized, but the status of the shared materiality of all things is elevated. All bodies become more than mere objects, as the thing-powers of resistance and protean agency are brought into sharp relief. (2010: 103)

Thing power has the potential to be anti-capitalist and to be inclusive of all since, if subjects and objects become understood as equal this might go some way in dealing with inequality, there is potential in creating a society in which individual greed is taken away. For example, if we understand every *body's* need for decent housing as a necessity in this way, then the thing-power (as in the building and the site in which it is placed) of property ownership might start to be dismantled.

In her lecture 'Out of the Ordinary: objects, agency and performance' (2017), Sara Jane Bailes discusses the chair as an actant of non-human agency within performance. She highlights through the work of Karen Barad, how we might begin to think of objects in relation to performativity, as actants or co-actants rather than as lifeless matter. She states that, 'objects and things do things, things thing, they produce effects that alter the course of events in ways that are not always reducible to human endeavour... they possess what Bennett describes as 'thing-power' ' (2017). Bailes uses the chair as a way to explore how objects are able to alter an experience both within everyday life and within the intentionality of marked performance events. She tracks the chair through a number of contemporary performance pieces, its role within the economy and political agendas such as redundancy, capitalism and work. For instance, Vlatka Horvat's *This Here and That There* (2007) consists of the artist arranging and rearranging a stack of chairs, over a period of eight hours, in a body of water – always taking place over the duration of a working day. The work highlights the power of objects to communicate the political, ecological, social concerns of the locations in which it is performed. In doing so, it

demonstrates the ways in which humans and non-humans interact with each other as parts of an assemblage.

### ***Precarity at Home***

The article that comprises Chapter One was written from within the context of our experience as housemates. Since then, we have moved into different houses with different people. There have also been other unexpected factors that have shaped our experience of renting and of being at home, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting national and local lockdowns of 2020 and 2021. We have been fortunate to have had places to shelter throughout the pandemic, and the home has been the safe space in which to wait it out. However, like for many, our interaction with the public world was reduced to the workplace and what we could access through the home via screens. Leaving home became either a luxury (for example, for daily exercise) or an indication that we were an 'essential worker', and that (our low paid) job is vital to continuing the services that enable others to remain at home. The boundaries between public and private space became blurred as we brought the external world into the home, making the kitchen table into the office space or a zoom quiz into a trip to the pub. The idea of returning home is normally of going from a public space to the private realm, in which one is relieved from the pressures of being public. The pandemic further highlighted the slipperiness of understanding the home as a place to return to and a place that restores, leading us to consider how 'feeling at home' or 'not feeling at home' (which we had predicated on renting) is more complex than such a binary suggests.

A consequence of precarity is a sense of anxiety, a feeling of something terrible just about to happen because of the level of security associated with that thing (non-permanent employment contracts, renting). To offer a grounded example (as discussed briefly in Chapter One), even when experiencing the trauma of being evicted we've been able to call on the support of friends and family in order to avoid the potential for homelessness, yet this fear of being unhoused continues to exist as a real possibility in our bodies. While we might always be able to rely on our friends or family to 'rescue' us if we lose our housing, the experience of living in insecure, overpriced rented accommodation means that this anxiety and the knowledge we may not be able to improve our conditions to gain more security is an embodied reality. Furthermore, the slipperiness and lack of fixity in relation to this example of insecurity bleeds into other aspects of daily life.

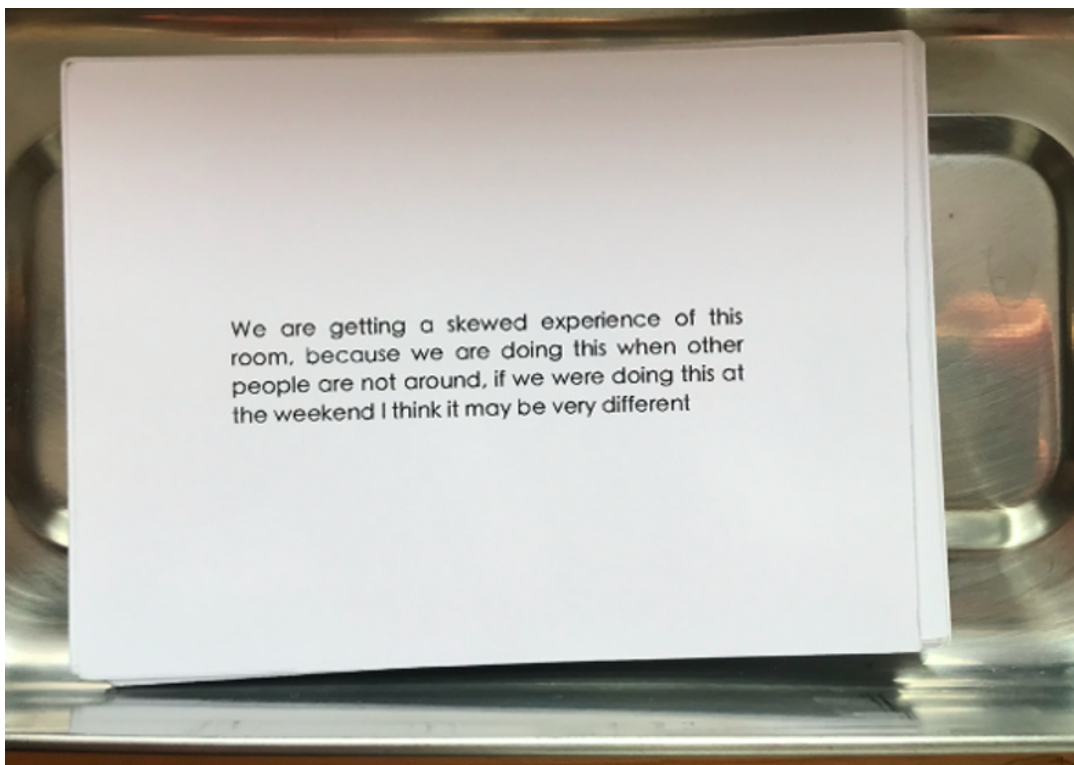
Sara Ahmed articulates precarity as a vase about to 'topple' (2017: 38). Even within our positions of relative comfort and safety afforded us by our socio-economic and racial backgrounds, the anxiety of 'one more push' furthers this sense of anxiety *in potentia*. Ahmed writes:

The more precarious you are, the more support you need. The more precarious you are, the less support you have. When we say something is precarious we usually mean it is in a precarious position: if the vase on the mantelpiece were pushed, just a little bit, a little bit, it would topple right over. (2017: 38)

A lack of secure housing uses up time, money and emotional energy that might otherwise be spent on managing health, education, or seeking employment opportunities. As discussed in Chapter One, one of the ways that hauntology is felt is through the closing of imagination, leading to an inability to see how the future may

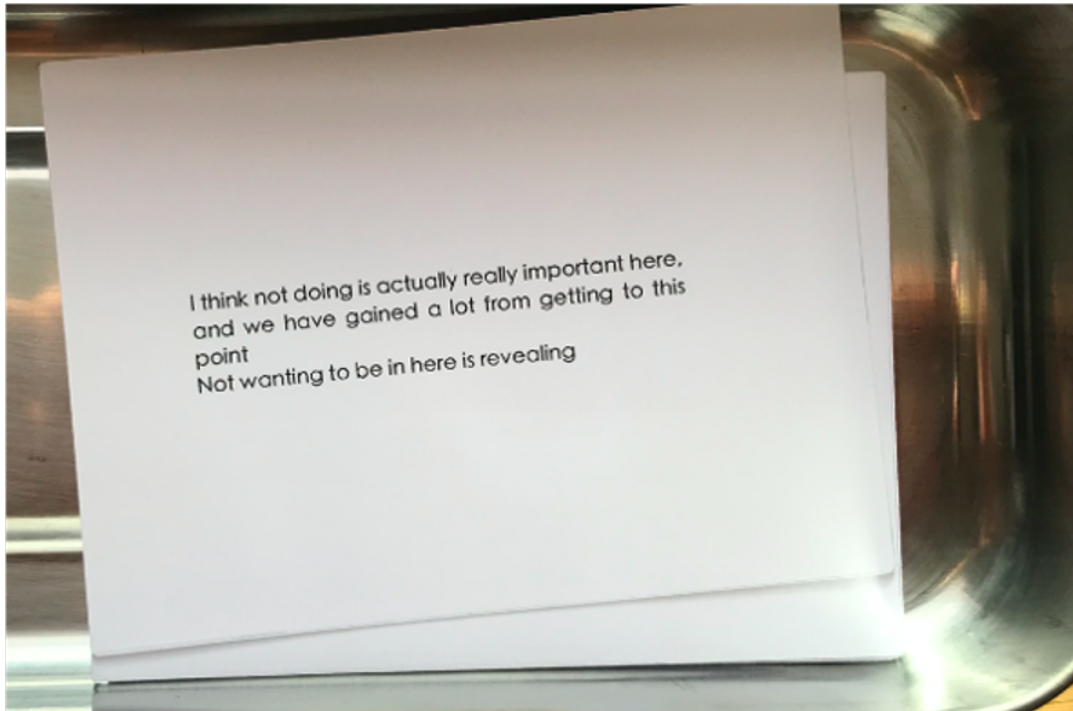
unfold now the once expected future is no longer available (Fisher, 2014). This feeling is akin to a 'stuckness' that can induce a sense of disempowerment or hopelessness.

For us, devising *House Box* by attempting to occupy rooms of the house (and the instructions made because of that) reflected the stuckness we feel as insecure tenants. Whilst we were grateful for this house that offered some stability, we knew that at most it would last up to three years, based on our previous experience and the peripatetic nature of being a co-tenant. In other, less secure, houses we've lived in, conducting such experiments in the home would have been an even more uncomfortable experience (this was made apparent by some of the experiences we had during lockdown).



**Figure 3.1: Example card from *House Box* showing reflections on experimentation.**





**Figure 3.2: Example card from *House Box* showing reflections on experimentation.**

Figure 3.1 shows an example of the performance writing that came out of spending an extended period in one of the shared spaces of the house. It demonstrates the type of things that we were thinking about and discussing as we performed the experiment. We were aware of the other people that usually use the space, and we were aware of how that space is used at different times. We purposefully did not name the room that the observation refers to, however it is clear (to us at least) that this is a room such as the kitchen or the living room. Both rooms felt like they were an important part of the house; in other places we have both lived we have avoided these communal spaces at times. But in this house these were spaces we were happy to be in, and this usually happened on weekends and in the evenings when most of the housemates were not working.

The performance writing pictured in Figure 3.2 is a reflection on some failings that we had in performing the experiments. We had some strong feelings about forcing ourselves to spend that much time in a given room of the house. This was connected to the relationships that we had with some of the housemates; living there had led us both to be more physically active and embed ourselves within our local surroundings and we would often go on group walks together to various local sites. Forcing ourselves to spend periods of time in one room of the house began to feel as though we were withdrawing from that and separating ourselves from those we lived with. In trying to make connections with the physical house we had somehow separated ourselves from the other people we lived with.

### ***Housing Precarity as Cruel Optimism***

The idea of cruel optimism is connected to the experiences of hauntology. If one element of hauntology is a perspective by which we might imagine or mourn lost futures, cruel optimism is the effect of relations that keep us stuck prior to this mourning. Cruel optimism describes the desire propelling us towards our neoliberal goals which we will never be able to attain. Lauren Berlant defines cruel optimism as:

A relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing. It might involve food, or a kind of love; it might be a fantasy of the good life, or a political project. It might rest on something simpler, too, like a new habit that promises to induce you in an improved way of being. These kinds of optimistic relations are not inherently cruel. They become cruel only when the objects that draw your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially. (2011: 1)

Using here the example of housing, we find our expectation of the home to be an object of cruel optimism. This might be the idea of one day owning a home, or even of one day being able to afford to live in a different configuration as part of a larger

house share, or of feeling secure in a long term let. If we use this as our goal, whereby we imagine we will have achieved security or insulated ourselves from precarity in achieving this goal, then we remain in an uncomfortable position now and for the foreseeable. In this example we pin our hope on focussing on a distant future as opposed to how to feel safe *now*. If we were able to imagine an alternative future rather than pinning our hopes on owning a house, or if we were able to imagine an alternative present, where we find other ways out of precarity than owning a house or financial security, then maybe the home would not be a site of cruel optimism.

The idea of having long term housing security in a format other than owning does not seem viable, unless it is within a housing cooperative, which in itself is not a highly available option. Making art about this however, is a way for us to make the homes that we are excluded from. The false promise of neoliberalism is that if we are good, work hard and are successful, at some point we might be rewarded (as we become worthy: that is, have more money) to look after our housing needs (although finding the employment that facilitates this is also difficult and complicated). Working towards the goal of long-term secure housing, for example, keeps us in a position of desiring something that is probably unattainable, and that is holding us back from imagining other solutions to our housing situation. Even if we attain our goal of a secure home, many others will not. We stay in the types of jobs we do that offer us little security in the hope that one day we will have enough experience to get more money or more reliable employment contracts. This in turn keeps us in insecure housing, because if we were to face that the desired contracts are unlikely, perhaps

we would seek out reliable employment that isn't related to our chosen field, and perhaps this would bring us housing security.

In summary, the connection between the idea that something that was sustaining you (or that you are working towards sustaining you) is now actually holding you back is a relationship of cruel optimism. When you are in a relationship of cruel optimism with something, you are affected by the fear that you cannot give the thing you desire up, as you will lose everything, even if that thing is harming you. This has the potential to be problematic, as people are 'stuck repeating their relation to a system that has fundamentally already thrown them out' (Coalition MARGINS, 2020, 27.48). Whilst Berlant states these kinds of relations are not inherently cruel, it is increasingly difficult to read cruel optimism in relation to neoliberalism as anything but cruel, when one has to earn security as opposed to one's existence ensuring security as provided by the state.

### ***Negotiating Public Space in Private Renting as a Millennial***

Public land is land that is collectively owned by the public, maintained by councils or equivalent bodies via taxation. The policing of the use of public land is complicated by the increase of 'pseudo-public' spaces – large squares, parks and thoroughfares that appear to be public but are owned and controlled by developers and their private backers (Shenker, 2017). The opportunities to loiter or play in public spaces is reduced. The new 'Protest powers: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022'<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> This is the government's new legislation, passed on 28th April 2022, that are set to control how and where people can protest. The government claims that protests that took place over 2019 — 2018 (including Extinction Rebellion and Black Lives Matter protests) were 'highly disruptive and sometimes incredibly dangerous' and 'a drain on public funds' (Home Office, 2022). The government say that the new law does not ban protesting, but puts measures in place to limit the threat to life and the

(Gov.uk, 2022) is a new law intended to stop protests and gatherings in public spaces. The references we make to 'public' in relation to shared rented housing blurs this definition. A tenant rents a space, but this space belongs to someone else. The tenant must negotiate their own sense of this being their 'private' space, with the landlord's policing of that space and any restrictions that are placed on the tenant.

This is further complicated in house shares, where the tenant may treat the bedroom (this is also true for 'studio' style apartments where the rooms are not separated) as a private space, and the other rooms of the house are negotiated shared spaces or public spaces. In such spaces, tenants must learn to be with others in a similar fashion to how they must be with others outside of the house, albeit within a closer, more intimate proximity. This is a kind of reversal of pseudo-public space: a pseudo-private space. The building (and often much of its content) is not owned by the occupants. Occupants' behaviours are monitored, by both the landlord (using deposits, contracts, inspections, unexpected visits and so forth) and by themselves, as living with others in such a fashion requires occupants to be conscious of their behaviours. The following statement by Brandon Labelle becomes aspirational:

[t]he home as a projected stable site, as a coordination and organisation of the flows and ruptures inherent to everyday life, to the destabilized core of the self, expresses interiority by becoming an intimate reflection of life and its private rituals. The home is an emotional space balanced on orderly refinement, from the chair one sits in every evening to the favourite cup. (2010: 49-50)

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threat of disruption for non-protesters, for example stopping a protest when 'police reasonably believe that the noise from the protest may cause serious disruption to the activities of an organisation or cause a significant impact on people in the vicinity of the protest' (Home Office, 2022). However, opposition to the law includes shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper who is quoted by the BBC as saying the law has been 'rushed' and will create "incredibly widely-drawn" powers, which will allow the police to "stop and search anyone in the vicinity of a protest, including passers-by, people on the way to work and peaceful protestors" (BBC, 2022).

The emotional relationship to one's home is impacted by unstable contesting notions of public and private, where sharing with others is a way the 'outside' comes 'into' the home. One's private rituals are made (on a micro scale) public. This was further extenuated throughout the mandates to work from home (brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic), where colleagues (and, in our cases, students) were invited into our living spaces through video calling. This meant that our otherwise private spaces became accessible to those we may not wish to see them (this was alleviated slightly by using digital backgrounds).

For the rental experience we are describing, the domestic setup isn't private in the sense that it is the space where your activities to sustain life<sup>30</sup> (eating, washing, taking care of your general health) are met; it is instead a shared space in which individuals might compete for the means to meet these needs (for example, when you may gain access to the kitchen, to the bathroom, to the washing machine). If, as for Bachelard, the private world is a space of restoration, a space for the 'phenomenology of imagination' (1994: 235), then one needs this space to rest from being worldly.

In *Places of the Heart* (2015), the psychologist Colin Ellard writes about the impact that the changing design of the Western home has on the relationships and social uses of the spaces within that home. Even in contemporary privately owned housing there is a tendency when cohabiting (in this context as couples and families) to regard different spaces of the house as public and private. There are, in some houses, rooms that are reserved for sharing with guests, for entertaining, and rarely

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<sup>30</sup> Arendt describes this as labour (Arendt, 1998: 80-81).

entered in day-to-day circumstances. Whilst this particular privileged position does not speak to us (in terms of having separate living rooms for day-to-day life and entertaining), it does highlight how rooms of a house are divided up when sharing with strangers and friends.

Renters who are unable to live with smaller numbers of co-tenants – who live in larger groups to keep other costs down – often live in houses that are former family homes subdivided into flats or with living rooms reassigned as bedrooms in order to fit more tenants in. This creates further alienation from the environment, from structural issues such as living in cheaply converted identikit houses,<sup>31</sup> with which there are sometimes safety concerns. To cosmetic considerations and whether tenants are able to express personal tastes with regards to decorating, and a continued feeling of infantilisation through not being trusted to look after the property. When the authors lived together, it was finally arranged for an electrician to check the safety of the house. He pointed out the illegalities and fire risks in the building. Our communications to the landlord about this (coinciding with new contracts and rent increase negotiations) was met with the response 'if the tenants make a fuss we will evict them'. Our desire to stay in that building was less about this dwelling representing an idealised version of home, or even feeling it was ours, than about desiring the security to restore ourselves and a place from which to organise our lives.

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<sup>31</sup> By identikit we mean: the removal or original features and the use of standard Ikea furniture meaning that with each move there is a kind of familiarity with the environment, decorated in such a way so as to require minimum upkeep

## ***Public and Private as Political Spaces***

In *The Human Condition* (1958), Hannah Arendt writes about the need for a public and a private life and makes clear distinctions about the two. Arendt draws on ancient Greek social structures to illustrate how the private life is that which happens within the home, and public life (polis) is the space of the political (1998: 30-31). Furthermore, for the ancient Greeks, the means to have a public life was only enabled through the few having a private realm: those who had their biological needs met (1998: 24) in the private realm were then able to appear in public and practice politics, and this was upheld through a system of slavery and subjugation of women.

For Arendt, neither the private nor the public realms are prioritised, and each is essential for the other to exist. This begins to fall apart when the distinctions between the two become indistinct; '[f]or Arendt, part of the problem of modernity lies in the collapse of this binary and the creation of an economics driven politics' (Kollektiv and Kollektiv, 2020). Kollektiv and Kollektiv discuss this in terms of the home being a site of economic production, particularly in the wake of Covid-19. If the home is a shifting configuration of *being with* others, then where does one stop being in public? Arendt emphasises the importance of privacy:

the four walls of one's private property offer the only reliable hiding place from the common public world, not only from everything that goes on it in but also from its very publicity, from being seen and being heard. A life spent entirely in public, in the presence of others, becomes, as we would say, shallow. (1998: 71)

In privately rented spaces, the bedroom door or wall is not a clear boundary between public and private space. One of us lived in a house in Hackney that was subdivided by plywood. The basement flat had no original ventilation, so the landlord installed a



pipe from this basement flat's bathroom into one of the bedrooms in the above flat. There were issues with privacy (due to noise), and crossing 'atmospheres',<sup>32</sup> and when the neighbours got stoned, this bedroom got hot boxed.<sup>33</sup> But at £400 per month, this was remarkably cheap for London, and tenants tended to accept it – though in this case the tenant did not stay long due to the impact this environment had on their health, relying on others to put them up and help them move out quickly. External walls and doors do not necessarily provide a clear buffer between the world outside and the internal world of the home. Neighbourhood sounds and smells bleed into the home and this example of shared renting highlights how the external world encroaches into the home in more intimate ways.

In the introduction to *Performing Home* (2019), Andrews provides a detailed description of the level of care that was taken over the renovations of the house that he lived in. Although we share a similar level of understanding about the impact that the physical space can have on the way that people live their lives, the one big difference that becomes clear is over the sense of choice that the owner has compared to renters. For example, Andrews reflects that:

In knocking down a wall between the kitchen and sitting room, we created one single room for which the purpose is less defined; it is a room we struggle to name. We have done other work: adding a velux window, plastering walls, changing the boiler, rewiring the house and boarding, in a rather over-engineered fashion, above the loft installation. (Andrews, 2019: xii)

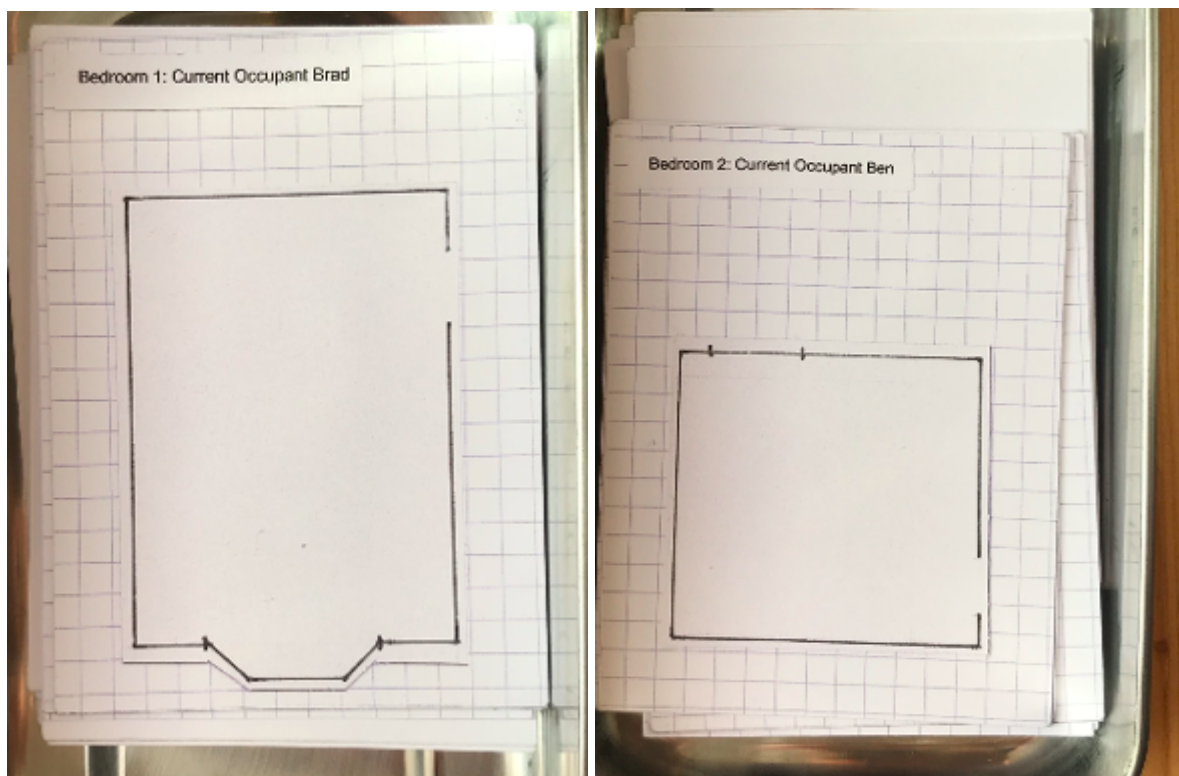
In creating *House Box* we attempted to establish a deeper sense of ownership over the rented housing in which we lived. The artistic decisions that we took and the

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<sup>32</sup> By this, we mean the other rooms and environments that come in, for example being able to hear others using the toilet from your bed.

<sup>33</sup> This is when you become involuntarily 'stoned' through the second-hand smoke in a room.

performance writing we produced can be understood as being in lieu of our renovations on a house that we were unable to make our own. We were unable to knock down walls, not able to decorate, but we were able to create something that specifically related to our experience of living there. Figures 3.3 – 3.14 show floorplans of the house, created from memory. Some of the plans show more detail than others and this is to reflect our knowledge of a particular room (they were not drawn from inside of each room and do not operate on a scale) but they do hold a likeness to architectural drawings or plans that could be used in a process of renovation.



**Figure 3.3 and 3.4: Map of Bedroom 1 and 2.**

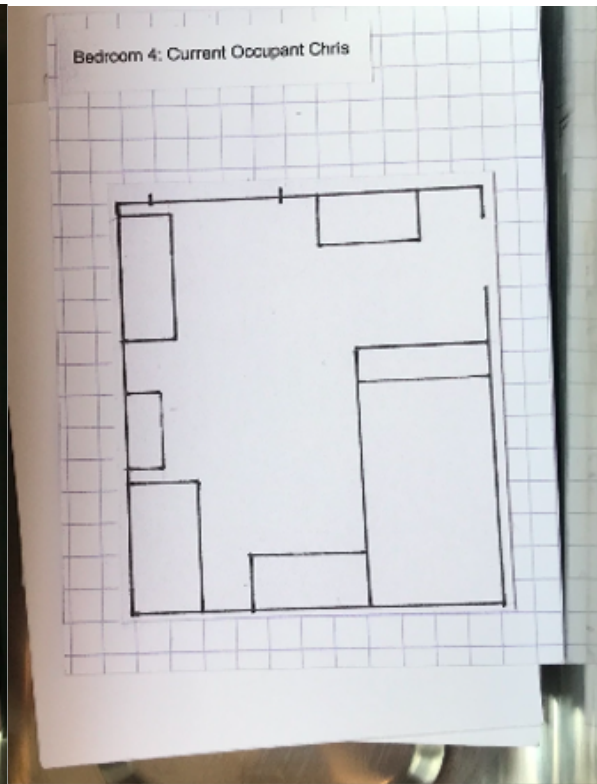
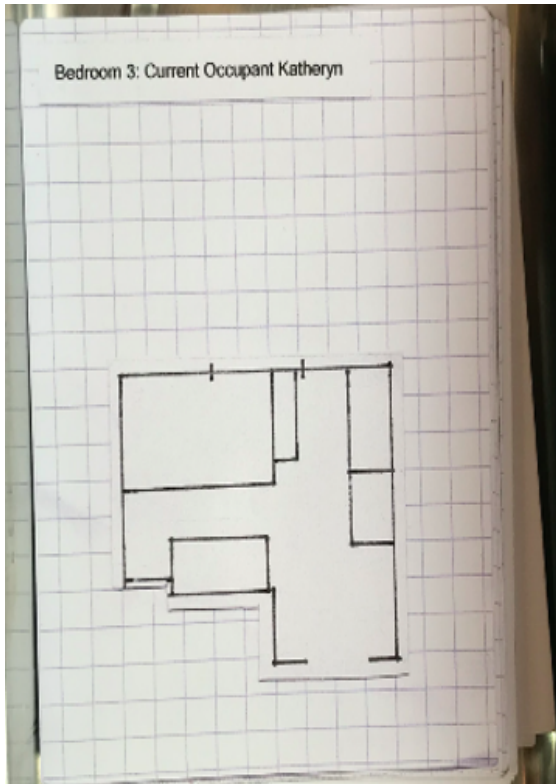


Figure 3.5 and 3.6: Map of Bedroom 3 and 4.

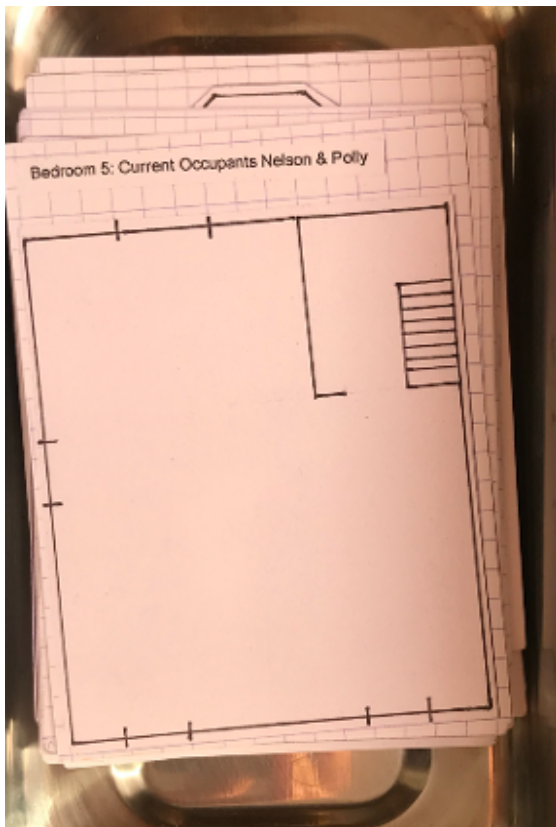


Figure 3.7: Map of Bedroom 5.

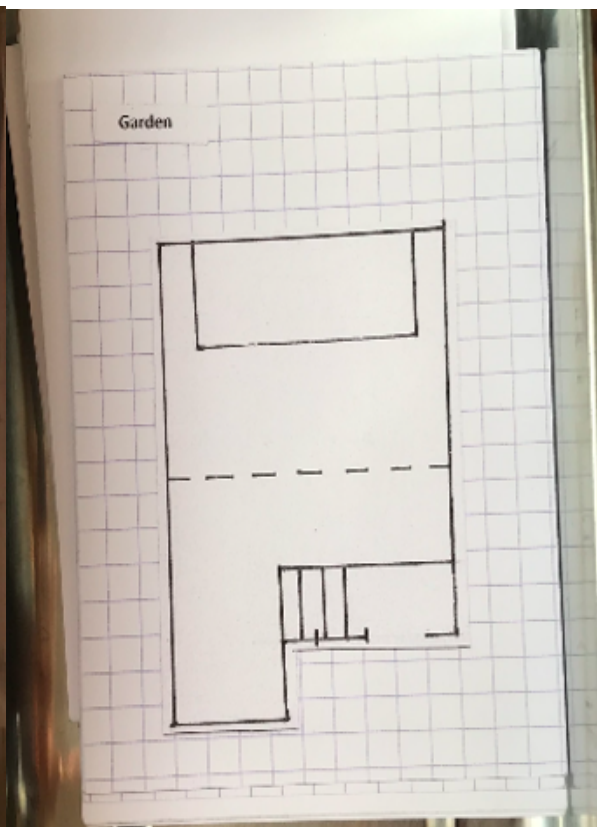


Figure 3.8: Map of the Garden.

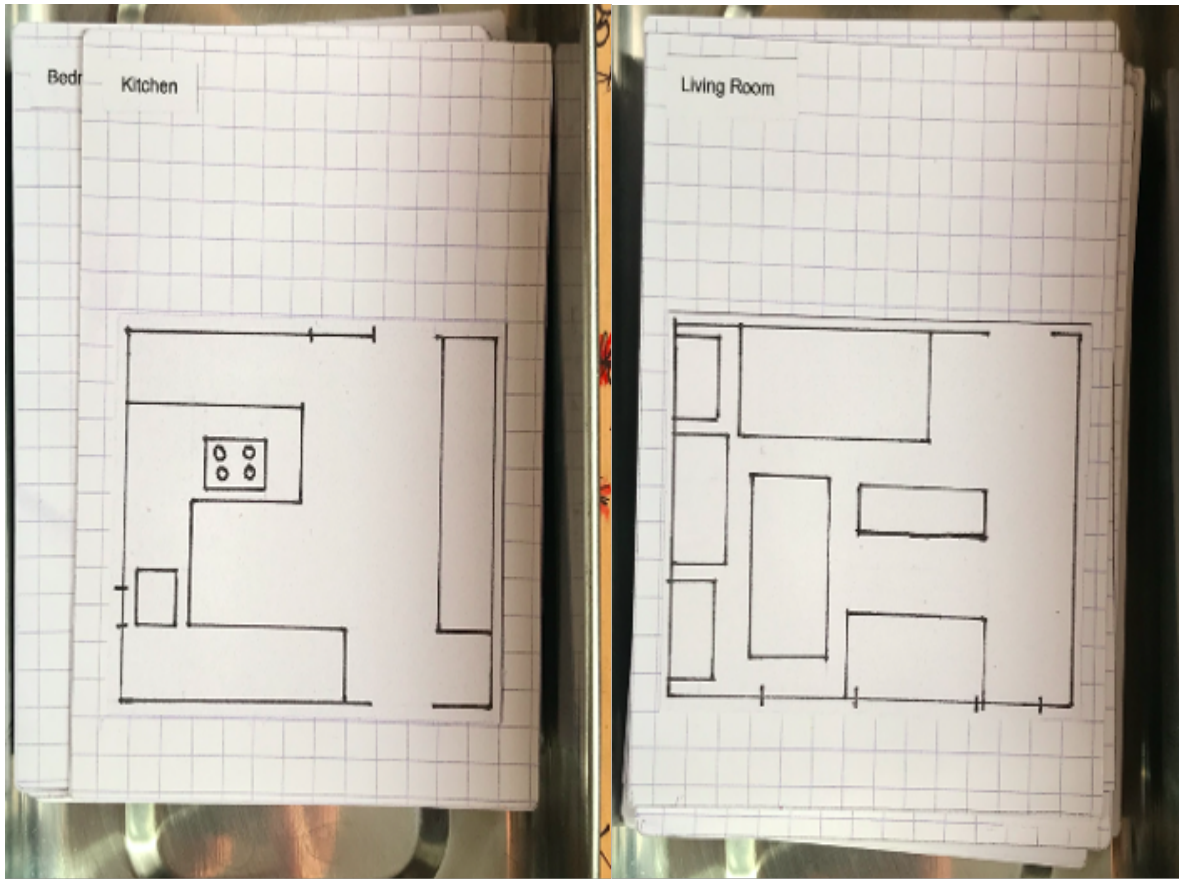
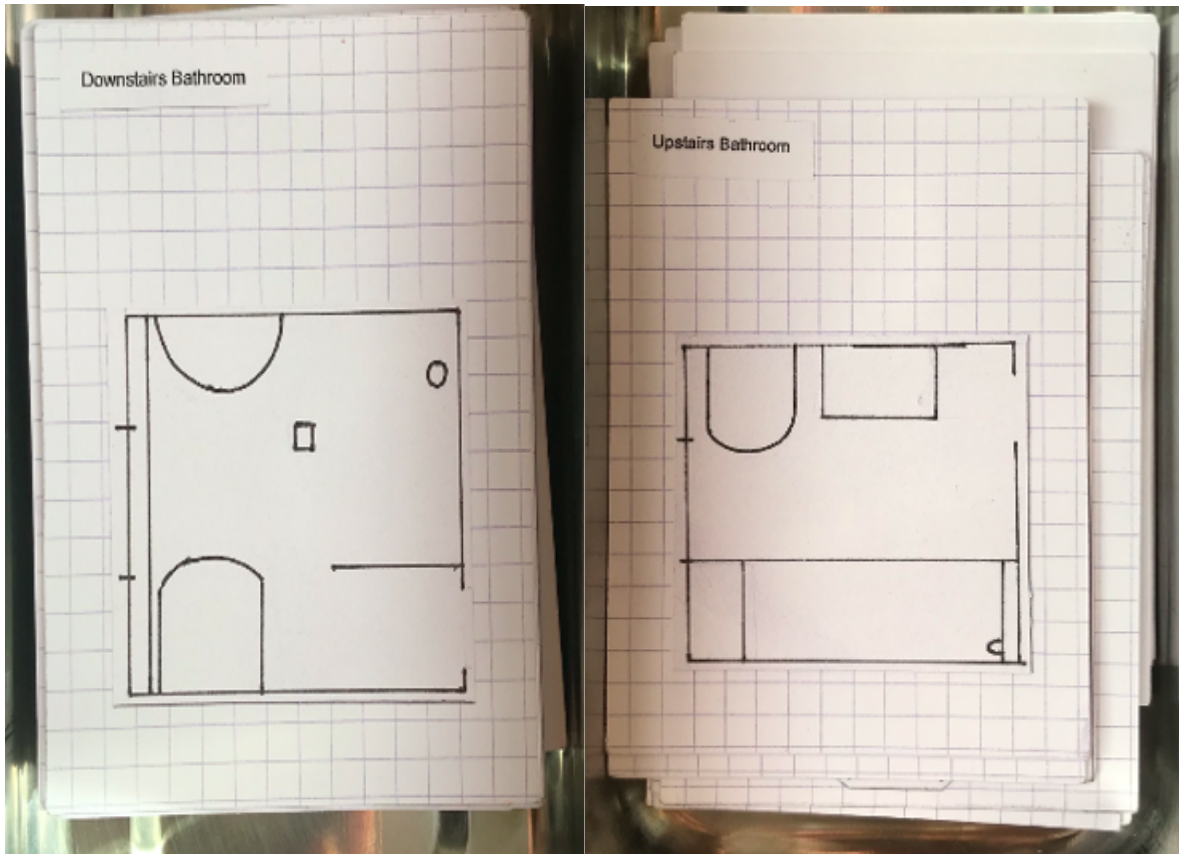


Figure 3.9 and 3.10: Maps of the Kitchen and Living Room



Figure 3.11 and 3.12: Maps of the Hallway and Landing.



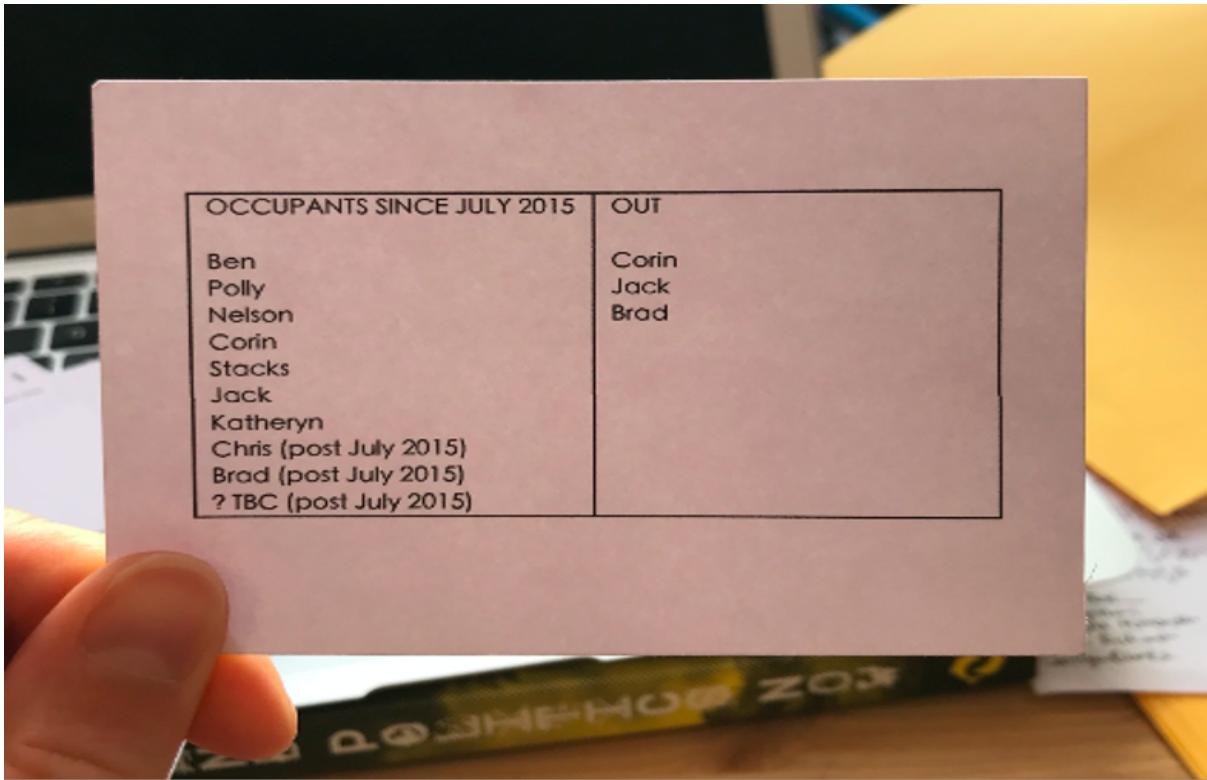


**Figure 3.13 and 3.14: Maps of The Bathrooms.**

Polis, in Greek, refers to the city. Hannah Arendt's use of the term refers to a body of citizens, and in particular is referred to as a 'Space of Appearance' (Arendt, 1958: 192). We suggest that we might think of the *House Box* and performance writing in a more general way as a possible space of appearance. For Arendt 'the polis, properly speaking is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organisation of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together and it's true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be' (Arendt, 1998: 198). Whilst Arendt is referring to a larger group of people being with each other to enact politics, we position the 'household' in a similar way. A house share is often based on a random configuration of people living together, a group that must learn how to live together, to share space and to hold space to allow others

to be supported – that we could understand as an assemblage of bodies, of different configurations of people coming together. The shared house acts as a polis through circumstance; to act together to maintain the house and ensure continued residence. This might be achieved at a basic level of following a tenancy agreement, or it might be on a more meaningful level of sharing something of themselves with one another (and it is these moments we would argue that the house has the capacity to become a home).

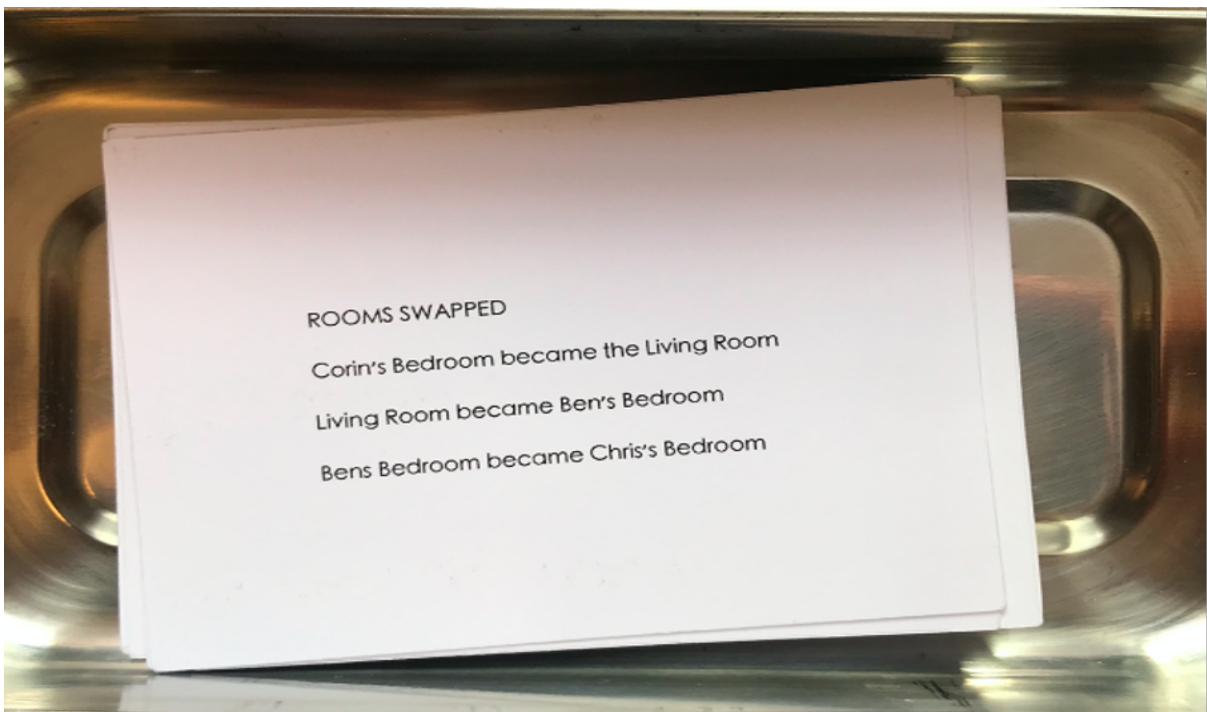
One way that this was experienced was through the changing of spatial configurations, for example we document in *House Box* the different configuration of house mates (see Figure 3.15) as well as the different rooms that they occupied (see Figure 3.16). We also reflect on how people swapped rooms and spaces and the impact that this had on our experiences of living there, in this way we experienced the living in this space as being a part of an assemblage. The most notable of the swaps was when the bigger bedroom became the living room, to allow the tenants to share this space communally more easily. This altered how we oriented ourselves around the house. It meant that the living room was now upstairs – the middle floor of the house.



A hand is holding a white card with a table. The table has two columns: 'OCCUPANTS SINCE JULY 2015' and 'OUT'. The 'OCCUPANTS SINCE JULY 2015' column lists: Ben, Polly, Nelson, Corin, Stacks, Jack, Katheryn, Chris (post July 2015), Brad (post July 2015), and ? TBC (post July 2015). The 'OUT' column lists: Corin, Jack, and Brad.

OCCUPANTS SINCE JULY 2015	OUT
Ben	Corin
Polly	Jack
Nelson	Brad
Corin	
Stacks	
Jack	
Katheryn	
Chris (post July 2015)	
Brad (post July 2015)	
? TBC (post July 2015)	

Figure 3.15: Occupants In and Out.



A white card is placed on a metal tray. The card contains the following text:

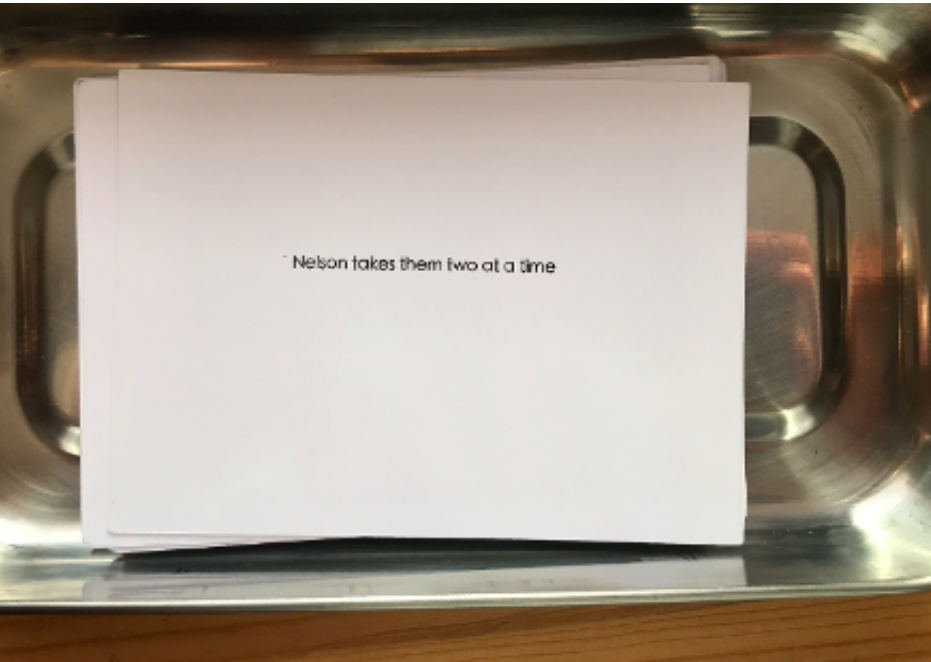
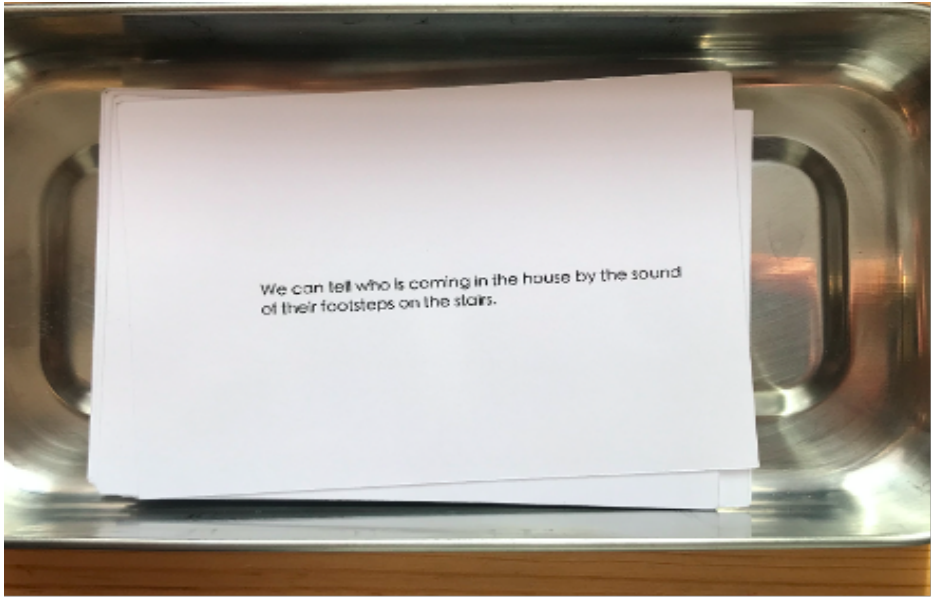
ROOMS SWAPPED  
Corin's Bedroom became the Living Room  
Living Room became Ben's Bedroom  
Bens Bedroom became Chris's Bedroom

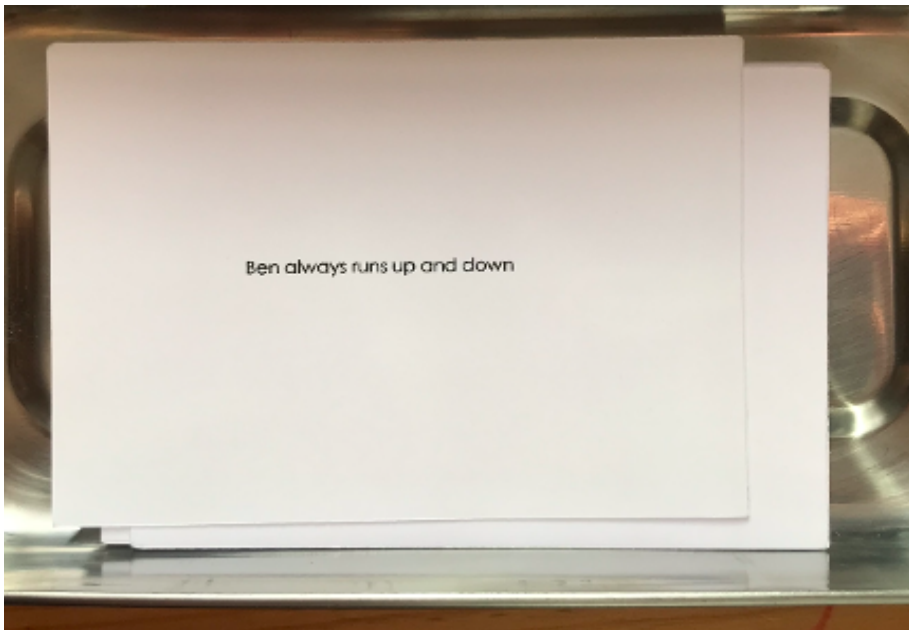
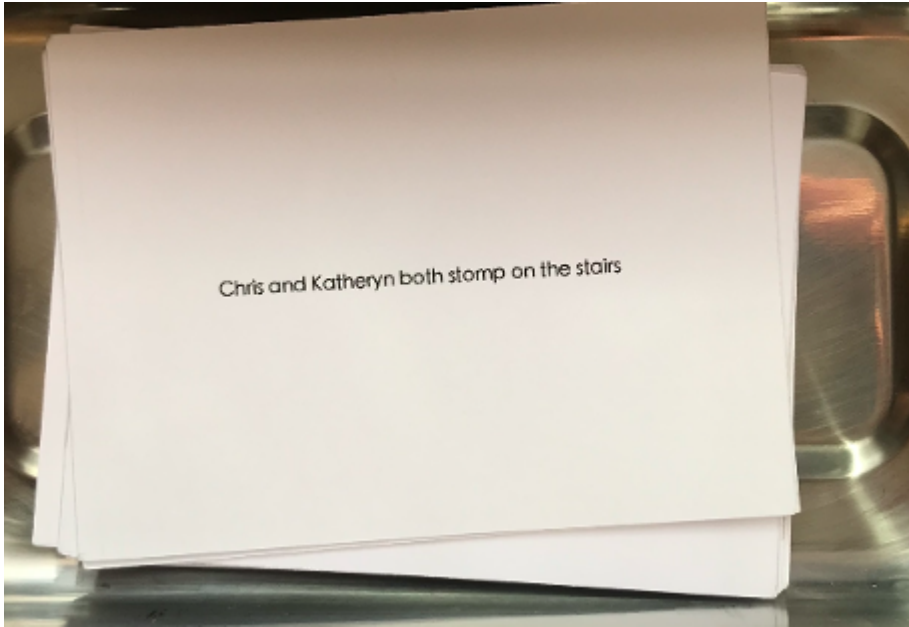
Figure 3.16: Rooms Swapped

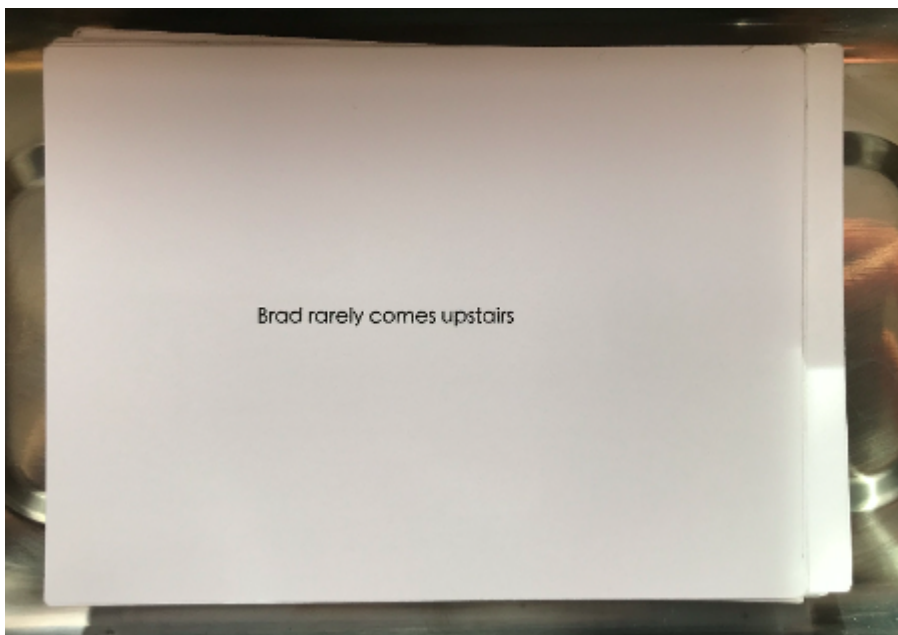
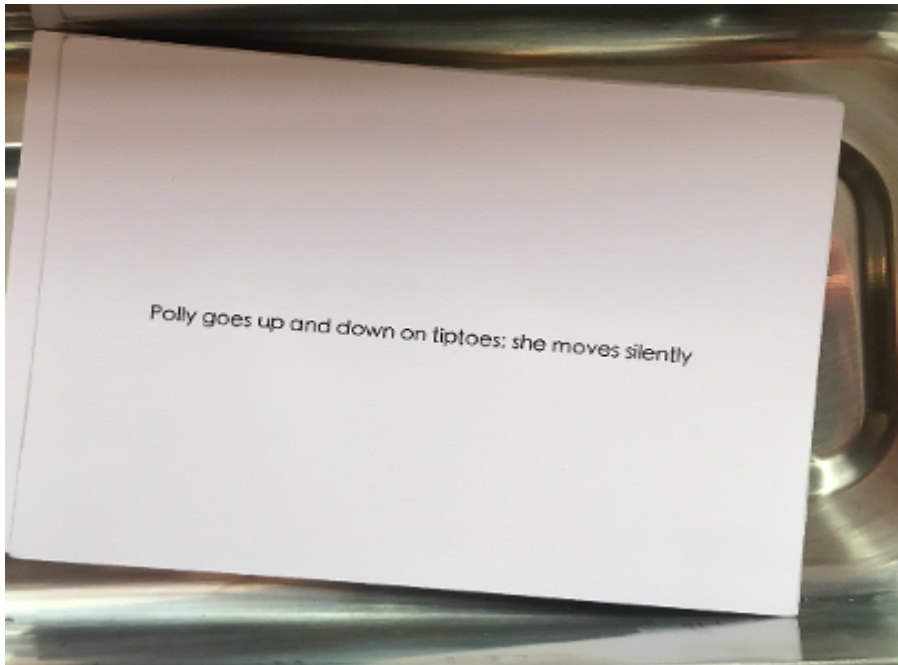
We found in that house that the kitchen was a focal point for doing research and for living together, more so than any other room. Curiously, when as a group we made food together and were socialising (in a room that does not fit all of us comfortably at once), someone would have to suggest that we move locations to the living room, where physically we would all be more comfortable – it was not a transition that came naturally. The kitchen was a site for camaraderie, and for conflict (for example, for issues that might seem petty such as finding food saved has been eaten, to larger issues around unequal division of domestic chores).

We noticed living together that we had become familiar with the sounds housemates made as they came up the stairs. This felt notable, in part because it indicated a level of familiarity had been allowed to build up through the time spent living together. This highlighted how when someone moved out and a new person moved in, a known sound was gone, and a new unfamiliar sound disrupted the status quo. At the time, this took us back to being children, and being able to recognise which parent or sibling was moving around the house and up the stairs by the sound of their feet. In smaller house shares it is less remarkable to recognise housemates' sounds, but in a large house share being able to distinguish between multiple people gave a sense of familiarity to the house. Not all the noises that we experienced were considered positive or interpreted that way for other people. We included this in *House Box* in order demonstrate the significance of sound Figures 3.17-22:









**Figure 3.17-3.22: The Sounds on Stairs.**

**The cards read:**

**We can tell who is coming in the house by the sounds of their footsteps on the stairs.**

**Nelson takes them two at a time**

**Chris and Katheryn both stomp on the stairs**

**Ben always runs up and down**

**Polly goes up and down on tiptoes; she moves silently**

**Brad rarely comes upstairs**

It is our intention that *House Box* through its potentiality as an assemblage could be a means of offering a different way of living, although we provide some rules for how the box is used, these do not necessarily have to be followed. As a result of this, we hope that being able to select specific aspects of the box, in an order that is not pre-set, could be a way to think about how to organise life within a home. The possibilities of the *House Box* as an assemblage for the artists, as a way of selecting how to interact with it, allows us to be selective of what aspects of that experience of shared housing we choose to re engage with and which parts we choose to leave alone.

### ***Conclusion: Returning to House Box***

*House Box* was made in 2017. It reveals a particular moment in our lives that seems far away now, but also reveals the ways in which that moment seems frozen. It is time that is out of joint. We are in the same position with regards to renting our housing and so nothing much has changed, but simultaneously we live from tenancy agreement to tenancy agreement which means constant change, and constant relearning and forgetting of things that seemed significant at the time. Reading through these cards, we are haunted by the ghosts of our past selves, and we become aware of how we are projecting ourselves as ghosts now onto our futures. For us as art makers, this is a process that simultaneously draws us into and away from the work. At the time we made *House Box*, we intended that people would use the audio tour and scores as ways to think about their own living environments, either as a way to explore their houses or through finding connections and differences between what we wrote about where we were, and where audiences are. Revisiting *House Box*, we are in effect that audience. We live in different houses,

with different people. The noises and smells and quirks of the houses we are in now that form part of the fabric of our daily lives are different to the ones when we lived together between 2015 and 2017.

*House Box* then is a haunted record of our time living at that house. It exists as a moment of acceptance for the 'lost future' and where we are at now; it is a way of commemorating the ghost. The idea of nostalgia speaks to hauntology, but rather than this being a nostalgia for a past that now feels unattainable, it is nostalgia for a particular moment where we were able to find joy in the unexpected present we found ourselves in. The time since living at that house has seen us in different housing situations that have had different problems and pleasures, and whilst *House Box* documents a time that still had difficulties related to renting, it was also a time we think of quite fondly, and we found ways to celebrate the house too. Some of the ways we did this are through the scores contained in *House Box*, such as Kitchen Dance, and observations, such as the kitchen extending to the garden in the summer. These are celebrations because they represent these moments of joy. However, the temporariness of even successful and happy housing arrangements mean that it is tinged with anxiety.

Sara Ahmed writes:

To be happily affected can survive the coming and going of objects. ... When grapes are out of season, you might recall that you find them delightful; you might look forward to when they will be in season, which means that grapes would sustain their place as a happy object in the event of their absence. However, this does not mean that the objects one recalls as being happy always stay in place. (2010: 23)

When you are in a pleasurable housing situation, you can enjoy it, make the most of it, and use it as a baseline of security with which to address your other needs: but

you know it is temporary. When you are in a difficult housing situation, you cannot anticipate when this moment will be over, because you do not know if your next housing situation will bring pleasure or stress. Security is hard to achieve. For us personally, we find joy in objects, and end up hoarding smaller things such as plants that we then carry from house to house, despite this making moving more difficult. And this is perhaps why we are drawn to making performance writing that is manifest through its materiality, through the objects that we make that house and keep safe the writing. These are objects to which we attach some sense of home.

This chapter builds upon the definition of performance writing in Chapter Two through connecting this to assemblage. The focus of this chapter has been on the materiality of the performance writing as a collection of objects to demonstrate the ways that we have used this methodology in the production of art that relates to housing precarity. Through thinking about the destinations between public and private we have been able to articulate the blurriness that comes about when living in shared housing, and the political potentialities that these spaces can afford as 'spaces of appearance'.

*House Box* is understood as both a way for us to make sense of these issues, but also to offer potential ways of thinking through the sense of stuckness that we describe above. Performance writing in this case becomes a hopeful practice for the artists, as we were able to (through the making process) see the ways that score writing, reflections, mapping and audio became valuable ways for us to 'make home' within the shared living conditions – this is further developed through our analysis of the *House Box* as an assemblage.

By identifying the relationship between thing-power and performance writing, and the relationships between objects and millennial precarity, the chapter further develops the responses to the first research question asking how might performance writing strategies interrogate a specific cultural, social and economic position; and the first research aim to develop a method of performance writing that situates and interrogates our experience of millennial precarity. It suggests that thing-power holds meaning during our investigation of our housing experience. It also introduces assemblages, offered here as form of collaboration with objects. The chapter introduces the relationship between precarity and hope, thus laying the foundation for future analyses of hope and friendship in millennial precarity (the third aim of the thesis).

## Chapter Four: Labour, Bodies, Capitalism and Object Making

We invite you to interact with *Desires for Labour* now.

A note on the use of text boxes in this chapter as anecdotal notes on our experiences: these are reflections of both the process of experimentation and of making the work. We kept diaries and reflected upon the labour of the research process in order to record the insights we generated about our paid labour. We include them here to demonstrate how the autoethnographic approach allowed us to make connections, formed through the devising and making period between the types of labour we perform and our experience of time.

This chapter moves on from housing to address another aspect of our experience of millennial precarity: employment precarity. We use writing by Hannah Arendt to locate employment within a critical framework of labour and temporality. The chapter provides a literature review that positions the research in a Marxist lineage that informs our analysis of employment related precarity, before describing the process of experimentation that led to a trilogy of performance writings called *Desires for Labour* (2019). As noted in Chapter One, performance writing is fundamentally characterised by its embedding and commitment to process, which includes the interrelationship between processes of making and their reception. This chapter discusses how devising and experimentation directly relating to our everyday experiences of precarity interrogate specific social, cultural and economic positions.

We focus here on one element of *Desires for Labour*, the banner, which we place within a lineage of protest and trade union banners. We also discuss the banner in relation to other contemporary artists such as Jeremy Deller, who adopt this form of



performance writing in order to make a connection between labour movements, art objects and resistance. The chapter introduces craft, as something which we use in the production of our performance writing. This usage is picked up again in Chapters Seven and Nine in relation to *Recipe Book*, but this chapter reflects a shift in our position where we begin to see the significance of objects within the research. This begins to establish process in terms of physically making objects as a characteristic of performance writing, and as such, the temporal qualities of performance writing. Finally, performance writing and its production methods are positioned as resisting the demands placed on us through the experience of employment precarity, through being pleasurable activities, and a hopeful potential is contained within this.

Therefore, building on the definition of assemblage in Chapter Three, as things in a relation with each other, our performance writing is positioned here as an assemblage of the process and experimentation that leads to the text, the text itself, the act of making objects, and the relations between these components. *Desires for Labour* embodies all these aspects of the performance writing assemblage, which we demonstrate here through an analysis of what the process of making revealed about the relationship we have between time and the types of labour we perform.

### ***Labour, Work and Action as a Framework***

Hannah Arendt's activities of labour, work and action (*The Human Condition*: 1998: 7-8) inherently concern the experience of time. Labour refers to that which meets our biological needs; the quotidian activities of (for example) eating and growing food, things where their 'consumption barely survives the act of their production' (1998: 96). Labour has no beginning or end, it is in a constant cycle of reproduction. Work

concerns a task that has an end point; Arendt uses the example of making a useful object such as a chair (1998: 153). Action refers to the political; an activity of potential, of 'acting together' (1998: 198). We focus here primarily on labour and work.

The experience of labour, of doing things that keep ourselves alive (eating, drinking, washing, caring for others) has a certain rhythm. This rhythm will alter depending on the context. For example, on a basic level one might experience labour in relation to the body's needs, such as feeding it when hungry. Or one might eat instead when food is available, and delay this as required. Or, under capitalism, the rhythm of this labour might be dependent on when a worker is allowed a break. This experience of time though has no end; each day, as humans we are aware of time passing based on responding to the needs of the activity of labour. Capitalism turns employment into labour for many, but one separate from the body's biological needs – working the required hours each day as opposed to working until a task is completed. Below we discuss our 'shit jobs', our work in hospitality, and one of the defining aspects of how we experience this work is that it has no beginning and end, other than clocking in and clocking out. In hospitality work, the role is constantly reproducing itself. Customers arrive, they are greeted, their order is taken, their food is prepared, they eat, they pay, they leave, the area is cleaned ready for the next customer. This shapes how time is experienced; waiting for a pre-set number of hours to be over rather than working through a task to be completed. In the labour of our hospitality jobs, the identity of the individual is not intrinsic to the job being performed. For example, either Katheryn or Chris could make someone a coffee or pour a pint and it makes little difference to the customer receiving their drink which one of us prepared

it. Depending on the customer service received, the customer might feel they have had a unique or special experience (we discuss this as emotional labour, below), but the identity of the worker is not intrinsic to the experience. Whereas labour constantly reproduces itself *in the support of life*, the economic imperative in our workplaces mimics this for profit, as opposed to for the body's needs. As such, one of the ways we now experience labour is no longer in support of the body, but as hours worked *in exchange for money to buy the goods that support our bodies*.

Work, for Arendt, is understood as those activities that go beyond the specific need to survive, but which have the potential to support how we survive (an example of this may be art making). Creating our performance writing then falls under the realm of 'work' in Arendtian terms, where the activity of physically making the work has a beginning and an end; the craft methods we use to make the objects means there is a point where the object is 'made'.

However, as performance writing, the objects have the potential to connect to Arendt's definition of 'action'. This has the potential to be political through the interrelation between the mode in which it is made, its objectness and materiality, and the text itself, in addition to how agency is expressed both in the object and the collaboration between artist and object (or reader-audience and object). This potential is not synonymous with a shift or change but is an activity where change might happen (or it might maintain the status quo; but the *potential* makes this political). Action has the potential for identity to come to the fore as it reveals who we are through interaction with another, and through how individuals appear and assert their agency (Arendt, 1998: 176). Thus, for Arendt, action is political. Within the activity of work, the identity of the artist is not at the forefront, as this is usurped by

the object made.<sup>34</sup> Action happens in the present and is continuous, though this temporal aspect is different to the quotidian or seasonal experience of labour, as it is about the means to assert agency as opposed to fulfilling biological needs or completing a task in service to these needs in which agency becomes secondary.

The framework provided by Arendt here informs our reading of capitalism and time and influences the artwork we made as *Desires for Labour*. Arendt's definitions helped us identify how our experience of millennial precarity influences where we experience labour, work and action in our lives. In making this work, we were thinking through our experiences of the different types of labour we engage in. This includes labour that takes place in the home, in shifting between roles in holding multiple jobs, and as being students.

### ***Capital (ism), Neoliberalism and Time***

The term Capitalist Realism was coined by the theorist Mark Fisher (2009). It references the soviet art movement, 'socialist realism', which presents a romantic idealised life under communism, using 'realistic' (rather than beautiful) artworks to lend legitimacy to propaganda images. Appropriating this notion then, capitalist realism is the idealised, aspirational image of life under capitalism (that we can all have more). Fisher describes the term to not only mean that capitalism presents itself as the only viable option, but that it has such a grip that there is now no means

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<sup>34</sup> However, there is some scope for identity to be revealed through the object made, for example, the artists may leave their 'mark'. The banner discussed in this chapter though is not the person who knitted it, and we are, we believe, unidentifiable within that object itself (other than the fact we have submitted it for this thesis as our work).

to even imagine an alternative: 'it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism' (2009: 2).

Fisher discusses the erosion of the boundaries between work and life, mirroring slipperiness of 'labour' in our daily lives, and how our hospitality jobs mimics Arendt's definition of labour. Fisher notes that:

Work and life become inseparable. Capital follows you when you dream. Time ceases to be linear, becomes chaotic, broken down into punctiform divisions. As production and distribution are restructured, so are nervous systems. To function effectively as a component of just-in-time production you must develop a capacity to respond to unforeseen events, you must learn to live in conditions of total instability, or 'precarity', as the ugly neologism has it. Periods of work alternate with periods of unemployment. Typically, you find yourself employed in a series of short-term jobs, unable to plan for the future. (2009: 34)

Time is an important concept in this capitalist model. A way of selling this way of working is to introduce the idea of flexibility: rather than removing work/life balance, this is presented as an opportunity to work flexibly and allow space for life within traditional working hours. Within a twentieth century assembly line model, the worker clocks in, stands at their station and repeats an activity over and over: this is their role in making a product. This method is known as Fordist<sup>35</sup>, with the American car manufacturer popularly credited with transforming methods of production, in order to increase productivity, and is akin to the distortion of Arendt's activity of labour under capitalism discussed above. A worker at a car manufacturing plant did not need to be a motor engineer; they needed to be able to perform one task in the building of a

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<sup>35</sup> Fordism refers to the production line model of working, used to mass produce identical products. Rather than an object being individually made (and so potentially differing from item to item), parts are made by assembly, thereby producing multiples of the same object. In this model, none of the workers on the assembly line need to be artisans able to produce the finished object solo, they only need to be trained to do their section of the assembly line. This is credited to Henry Ford and his transformation of car manufacturing (Wanjiru, no date).

car. This gives the worker a lack of autonomy, and a lack of creativity in their work,<sup>36</sup> and little means for promotion beyond becoming a middle manager and ensuring all the other workers are doing their bit on the assembly line properly (Gramsci, 2005: 95-100). However, as Fisher goes on to state:

The “rigidity” of the Fordist production line gave way to a new “flexibility”, a word that will send chills of recognition down the spine of every worker today. This flexibility was defined by a deregulation of Capital and labour, with the workforce being casualized (with an increasing number of workers employed on a temporary basis). (Fisher, 2009: 33)

In our experience, this becomes an opportunity to casualise or outsource staff that reduces unity and opportunities for solidarity, since we do not know who we will be working with from one day to the next. Under casual contracts, we have gone years without meeting some of our colleagues. This leaves us feeling isolated, powerless and dehumanised.

In *Willing Slaves of Capital* (2014), the economist and philosopher Frederic Lordon describes the relationship between worker and employer as one based on the worker’s desire to survive. He asserts, ‘[a]s the provider of money within the capitalist social structure, the employer holds the key to the basal desire, the desire to survive, which is hierarchically above and the condition for all other desires, making the latter, by definition, also subordination to the employer’ (2014: 18). In this model, when your paid employment functions as Arendtian labour, then your identity is secondary to the need to be paid by the employer; thus, limiting the scope for action, the space for identity, to be plural, to be political. This in turn has created a divided community of workers, where the means to survive comes before unity and

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<sup>36</sup> This term is used here with a level of irony, creativity having now been co-opted by capitalism.

support of each other. It is through the need for this most basic of desires to be met that workers become subordinates of their employers. This might be described as having a loyalty to the company: the very loyalty that creates a feeling of guilt and of letting the workplace down if you are required to take a sick day. According to Lordon, 'the goal is reached when employees, "moving entirely of their own accord" and without needing to be further co-linearised, strive in the organization's direction and bring it their power of acting unreservedly as a perfectly voluntary commitment' (2014: 123). He positions the organisation as almost human-like, where capital has agency.

In this vein, Marx often referred to capital as vampire-like. He wrote: 'capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks' (2013: 162). There is a continuous loop or 'life cycle' in relation to labour; on the one hand we need money to survive, so we are compelled (or forced) to work, yet the system is sucking out the very basic things that make us human, so employees are played off against each other in an act of cannibalism (through a fight for hours and, as such, survival).<sup>37</sup>

Marx's analogy of blood-sucking filters through to human-to-human relations. We are not expected to be supportive of each other; competition and self-promotion is central to success.<sup>38</sup> The things that make us human become obstacles to how we operate within this model. This is documented well in Jonathan Crary's book *24/7*:

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<sup>37</sup> Chris Harman's *Zombie Capitalism* (2009) examines these ideas within a post-2008 financial crisis era; under capitalism workers are described as cannibalistic.

<sup>38</sup> Or rather, we find that when we are asked to be supportive of each other this is under the guise of being a team and thus working more productively, but what this actually means is that pulling together as a team is to benefit the employer rather than the members of that team.

*Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (2014) in which he describes the incompatibility of capitalism and all the things which make us human (sleep being the number one obstacle to our productivity). Capitalism's striving towards individuality is linked to the unsubstantiated notion that to be successful is to rely on nobody: 'in many different ways, the attack on values of collectivity and cooperation is articulated through the notion that freedom is to be free of any dependency on others, while in fact we are experiencing the "free" workings of markets' (Crary, 2014: 115). As has been shown time and time again, when the markets collapse the thing that is left is the relationships between people; the markets only take what they need from people and do not support a liveable life.

The dehumanisation of capital is in denial of itself; in order to appeal to the will of the consumer, hospitality workers are forced to perform a false sense of freedom for the product to become more sellable. Fisher notes that within capitalism, workers are required to perform immaterial labour even within service industry jobs. He uses an example of a cafe worker being disciplined by management for only displaying the required amount of 'flair'<sup>39</sup> on their uniform in Mike Jude's satirical film *Office Space* (1999):

Joanna, a waitress at the coffee chain, wears exactly seven pieces of flair, but it is made clear to her that, even though seven pieces is *officially* enough, it is *actually* inadequate - the manager asks if she wants to look like the type of person 'who only does the bare minimum'.

"You know what, Stan, if you want me to wear 37 pieces of flair," Joanna complains, "why don't you just make the minimum 37 pieces of flair?"

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<sup>39</sup> 'Flair' in *Office Space* refers to markers where workers express their individuality, e.g. through a brooch or hairstyle, within the required uniform. The irony is that, once self-expression becomes mandatory (to give the business the front of allowing individuality and identity to flourish), it no longer is self-expression, but is policing uniform and is monitoring compliance.



“Well”, the manager replies, “I thought I remembered you saying that you wanted to express yourself”.

Enough is no longer enough. (Fisher, 2009: 39-40)

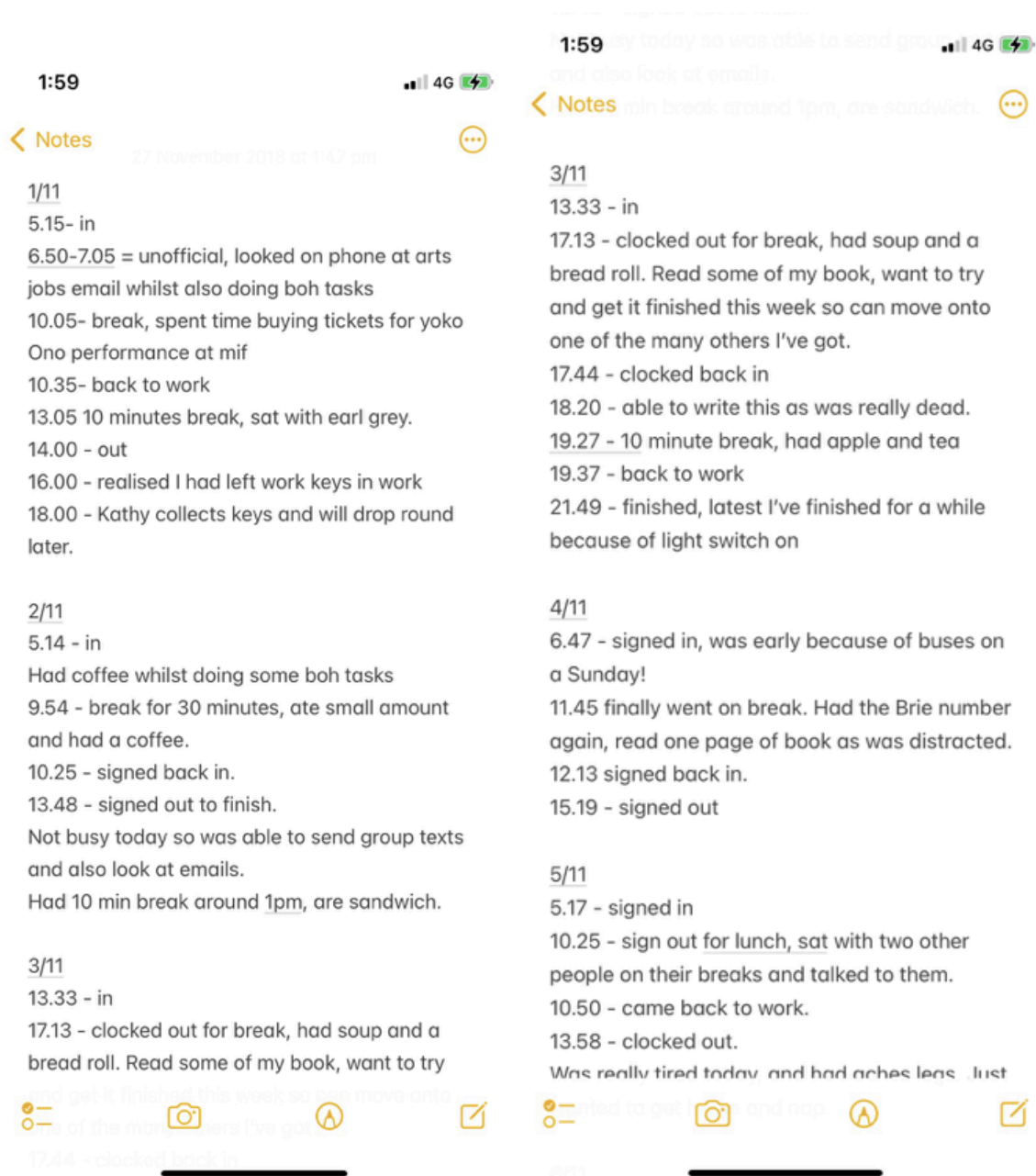
Fisher describes here a situation in which satisfactory no longer means satisfactory at all; even within the lowest paid and most insecure roles, it is an expectation that you will go beyond what is minimally required of you. In this example, the worker must ‘perform’ identity, but this is not the space of action, as how this identity is performed must fulfil a quota of identity markers. The exhaustion that this causes is no accident; it is a political implication of capitalism that renders workers unable to feel energised and to lack the ability to mobilise in the demand for better conditions and benefits.

These theoretical underpinnings provide the context for the experimentation phase prior to making *Desires for Labour*. At the forefront of our minds was frustration in our jobs; dissatisfaction with the activities involved in these jobs; feelings of hopelessness, stuckness, and isolation; and lack of autonomy and agency at work.

### ***Documenting our Labour***

The experiment began in autumn / winter 2018, noting down clocking in and out times at our ‘shit jobs’ and ways we claw back time or multitask (e.g. checking emails for our ‘aspirational’ job whilst in the loo at work etc). For a time, this made being at work more desirable, as it felt like more than getting through the shift out of necessity, and became research time, or secret time, or productive time. I think that’s one of the main ways that my sense of time altered – time is quicker if it is either productive or fun. This seems counterintuitive when the drive to productivity and a 24/7 working life is problematic, and yet, one of the issues I have in my shit job, apart from finding it often boring and being spoken to like shit, is that it is taking me away from using my time productively.

We set ourselves the task of documenting our working week, to identify the ways that we use our time. We were interested in whether there were periods of time at work that felt like 'our time' or 'our employer's time', and in how our time was being used: in particular, when our activities were bound by temporal experiences of 'labour' or 'work'. In order to do this we noted the dates and times that we clocked in and out of work, our breaks and the moments where we 'took back' time. See Figure 4.1 below for Chris's documentation of this:



**Figure 4.1: example of clock-in / out documentation.**

We did this over a month in November 2018. At the same time, we paid attention to how we felt in relation to what we had identified as labour or work each day. We noticed that if we felt more pleasure at work, this offset some of the anxiety of the precariousness of our work – not that pleasure replaces security or pay, but that it was one factor in our general sense of wellbeing on a day-to-day basis. Further below we discuss the categories of labour we identified as being engaged in,

because of this experiment. As such, our satisfaction or dissatisfaction in relation to these categories became a factor in how we analysed our days. We discuss this as the Labour Pleasure Index in Chapter Five. Towards the end of this chapter, we draw on Berardi as a reference to understand why satisfaction and pleasure are important to us in this project; we discuss pleasure as a resistant strategy to the demands that workplaces on our time and bodies. Capitalism delays pleasure, in part because it places demand on the worker's time, in part because it saturates 'leisure time' (or 'pleasure time') with capitalism (leisure often being in a relationship with consumption), and in part because capitalism is predicated on constant desire. Desire is a wanting, a not-having (a driving force for growth), and pleasure is an in-the-moment joy. Desire is felt through lack, and pleasure is embodied as being or having, not as having 'more' in relation to a capitalist narrative of growth, but of having the ability to hold space and time for pleasure.

We colloquially call our hospitality jobs 'shit jobs' and we will refer to them as such here. We use the term shit jobs in contrast to David Graeber's term 'bullshit jobs' (2013). Bullshit jobs are those 'pointless jobs (that exist) just for the sake of keeping us all working', seen in the:

expansion of sectors like corporate law, academic and health administration, human resources, and public relations. And these numbers do not even reflect on all those people whose job is to provide administrative, technical, or security support for these industries, or for that matter the whole host of ancillary industries (dog-washers, all-night pizza delivery) that only exist because everyone else is spending so much of their time working in all the other ones. (Graeber, 2013)

A shit job is one which is necessary, but in which the conditions of work and wage do not match the importance of the job – a job where you might be treated as shit

(nursing and cleaning being examples used). Whilst the capitalist model of hospitality does result in the creation of a myriad of bullshit jobs (such as the job of maintaining the app for ordering directly to the table rather than via a human), we differentiate between shit and bullshit here. Hospitality sits in a middle ground. Whilst clearly hospitality isn't vital to our physical survival like nursing or cleaning, it does supply a vital social need that exists outside of the ancillary industries listed above. Having people to staff this is important, although this could exist in a very different model to the ways capitalism has co-opted the notion of hospitality. We call them this without intending judgement on the actual performed labour of the job (people like drink, food and social spaces, and we see a social value in this and can derive pleasure from this work). However, we call them our 'shit jobs' partly because of how the work is regarded socially (quantified in part by the low wage, the particularly hierarchical employment structure, and through the expressed concerns of family of what we should be earning at this age) and partly because a lot of the time we do not enjoy this work, but it is a means to an end and is something we can get away with not taking too seriously.

One of us works in a branch of a large coffee chain and one of us works in a large bar / restaurant. Generally, this work is flexible, and we adjust our hours based on other work or commitments we may have. They are low waged, but we stay because moving to a better paid job is risky in regard to flexibility. The hours tend to mean we get the best part of the morning or afternoon free also; this flexibility means we are in a sense 'stuck' in these jobs. We also work as lecturers on insecure contracts.

We are always connected to our precarious work, especially in our academic roles. We feel that we should be able to respond to emails and react in a way that

someone in a full-time position might be able to, so that we are seen as reliable and so we are always 'in the loop'. We have often found that this pull to our academic jobs has been a reprieve from our shit jobs, being able to momentarily shift mindsets to the work that we wish we were able to make a living from (for example, whilst on shift in hospitality, running to the staff room to respond to an university email quickly). Although we have both been employed at the same institution for almost seven years, we get no security from our employer and are employed on concurrent temporary contracts, our place within the workforce is precarious, and we sit on the fringes of the team. Defining precarity in relation to work, the cultural and media theorists Neilson and Rossiter note:

precarity is where immaterial production meets the crisis of the social systems which were based on the national social compromise of normal employment. Because work - in order to become productive - becomes incorporated into non-labour time, the exploitation of workforce happens beyond the boundaries of work, it is distributed across the whole time and space of life. (In Tsianos and Papadopoulos, 2006)

A lot of the labour we perform happens outside of our 'working' hours. In a 2019 study published by the UCU (University and College Union) that surveyed casualised members of staff, 97% of respondents stated that they would rather be on permanent contracts. This shows overwhelmingly that these kinds of 'flexible' contracts are a lifestyle choice, is a myth. These practices have a negative impact for both the permanent teaching staff and many casualised staff (71% of respondents) reported how their contractual status had negatively impacted their mental health. The report makes it hard for institutions to justify their reasoning behind continually choosing these employment practices. It is also clear from the report that the inability for those on such contracts to be able to plan for the future (83%) entrenches precarity (UCU, 2019: 4).

In theory, our academic jobs are our 'good jobs'; they are better paid, come with more social cachet, potentially more career progression, and hold our interest more. However, these jobs keep us in precarity as the nature of the contract (zero hours) leaves us unable to plan for the future on either a short term or long-term basis. This is why we stay in the low wage flexible shit jobs: in case we get hours at the university. This in turn keeps us in insecure housing. This is a common picture amongst our friends who identify as millennial, whereby they were unable to secure these types of jobs before the move to casualisation took effect.

### ***Forms of labour***

The way we experience the demands of labour is broad, and we often perform a number of different types of labour at once. We spend a lot of time at work, but the work does not define us; particularly as our roles often contrast significantly. However, the forms of labour we carry out often overlap and are experienced as accelerated. Below we define six types of labour that are particularly pertinent to our research and that we have used within the practice element discussed in this chapter. Through documenting our quotidian experience at work we were able to notice patterns of the types of labour we were performing, listed below.

Employment labour: These are the ways in which we make ends meet, officially and unofficially the exchange of our time and the performance of tasks for money. Our hospitality jobs are in a constant cycle of production and consumption. Its end is characterised by an arbitrary act of 'clocking out': should we keep our jobs, there will always be more of this work tomorrow. This mirrors the activity of labour as defined by Arendt. As Marx stated in his lecture at the 1847 Communist League Congress (published as a pamphlet in 1891) 'labour-power is a commodity which its possessor,

the wage-worker, sells to the capitalist. Why does he sell it? It is in order to live'

(Marx, N.D.)

As the Marxist-feminist academic Silvia Federici wrote:

The wage gives the impression of a fair deal: you work and you get paid, hence you and your boss are equal; while in reality the wage, rather than paying for the work you do, hides all the unpaid work that goes into profit (...) To have a wage means to be part of a social contract, and there is no doubt concerning its meaning: you work, not because you like it, or because it comes naturally to you, but because it is the only condition under which you are allowed to live. (Federici, 1975: 2).

This statement articulates our bias within our jobs: even when we enjoy our work, we are somewhat disgruntled at this social contract. This is only exacerbated by the experience of precarity.

Educational labour: This is in relation to 'official' educational activities (this PhD) *and* other moments of learning required as part of our paid work. For us, this moves between being pleasurable (we enjoy this PhD) or time-consuming unpaid work that does not hold our interest (related to things we need to learn for our jobs; this may also be referred to as immaterial labour, see below). Educational labour refers to any moment of learning we identify in our daily lives; however this does not assume we find this learning useful or valuable.

Domestic labour: this refers to the work done to look after our domestic environments. This involves both work for the self, for others (when we might be cooking or cleaning voluntarily or not, for housemates) and work done for us (when others cook and clean for us). This also involves other activities related to running a domestic environment: admin, dealing with landlords, utilities companies. Since the



1970s, domestic labour has been part of a feminist Marxist discourse, for example through the work of Silvia Federici and *Wages for Housework* (1975).

This was a feminist campaign that demanded payments from governments for the unwaged work that women do within the home, in order to maintain the home. This draws attention to the unpaid work that often is the responsibility of women, including looking after the home and rearing children. However, in our performance writing we are not documenting our experience with the intention of noticing gendered tasks as we are not in traditional heteronormative domestic arrangements and our research focus has not been on gendered experiences of precarity. We are instead attending to feelings within our domestic situation, and the relationship between this type of labour and domestic precarity; and where this relates to moments of immaterial labour (see below), or to our experience of shared housing, or to managing a work/life balance and time.

Emotional labour: This tends to run through all the other types of labour and is the managing of one's emotions in relation to labour, a concept developed by Arlie Hochschild in the book *The Managed Heart* (1983). Generally, this is taken to mean managing emotions in order to conduct paid work. Hospitality is a clear example, where customer service involves a degree of emotional labour in order to demonstrably provide good service. However, for us this does not just concern the workplace, being something performed in order to contact landlords, and to co-exist in new domestic social situations. This is also extended to the management of communication, such as in the way that you might approach an email depending on who you are sending it to. Knowledge of colleague's, or client's or manager's

characteristics and anxieties becomes a part of the emotional labour which you have to perform in order to do your job. Hochschild explains that work which requires a degree of emotional labour consists of three common characteristics: 'firstly, they<sup>40</sup> require face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with the public. Second, they require the worker to produce an emotional state in another person – gratitude or fear, for example' (1983: 147). We describe the latter characteristic as *affective* and we discuss this below. The third characteristic Hochschild describes is that, 'they allow the employer through training and supervision, to exercise a degree of control over the emotional activities of the employee's (1983: 147). The degree to which employees are required to perform emotional labour often depends on the employer, and there are usually assessments for this, such as 'mystery shoppers'<sup>41</sup> (which are often linked to financial benefits for employees).

Doing this experiment reminds me that I once attended an interview for a position at a large chain, it was minimum wage, and it was in central London. I was required to attend a full selection day, which we were not paid for, I don't even think we were fed. The day was managed by the head of 'people' (an attempt to re-humanise HR, I think), we were required to partake in a number of demeaning and humiliating tasks such as coming up with a jingle for an advert that represented us as a group and reflected the company, all the while being assessed and watched for how we interacted with each other. It was at this point that I knew I did not want to work there, but I wanted to stay to see how the rest of the day went. At the end of each task people were sent home, surprisingly I lasted fairly long considering I had decided to give up caring pretty early on. Just before I was told I would not be carrying on to the next section the 'head of people' said, "Yes, it's minimum wage, but that does not mean minimum effort, I expect to see smiling staff when I walk into a restaurant". At the time I was happy just to get out of there, but for weeks after I considered emailing her to highlight everything that was wrong with the company's approach.

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<sup>40</sup> 'They' refers to the job or work.

<sup>41</sup> This is a process where a company will employ (often through a third-party agency) people to act as customers, but then go on to review their experience. It is a way for staff to be 'audited' in secret, although from personal experience it sometimes becomes obvious who that mystery shopper is.

Affective labour: In our experience of hospitality work, affective labour is performed in relation to emotional labour. Where for us emotional labour concerns the managing of the worker's own emotions, affective labour is to produce an affect in someone else (Hardt & Negri, 2000 & 2005). Whilst this is the second characteristic of Hochschild's definition that jobs must meet to be classed as emotional labour (see above), the emphasis here is in roles that require a particular emphasis on producing an affect. In hospitality, this is to provide a particular atmosphere or experience that keeps the customer engaged in their consumer relationship with the establishment. This can also relate to other types of work and other types of affective experiences. For example, in therapeutic dynamics, advertising and film, and within the domestic. We also experience this form of labour in creating a learning environment for students, such as in seminar sessions where our role is to facilitate learning rather than transmitting knowledge.<sup>42</sup> There is often a juxtaposition in this kind of labour, between the affective experience of the employee and the customer / consumer / service user.

If affective labour in our hospitality roles is to create an emotional experience, then the emotion we are instructed by our bosses most often to encourage is *happiness*. We are told to make sure that the customer always leaves feeling *happy*. Sometimes, we achieve this by performing our own happiness, the affect of which Sara Ahmed describes in *The Promise of Happiness* (2010): 'you feel happy, not quite knowing why, and the feeling can be catchy, as a kind of brimming over that exceeds what you encounter. It is not that the feeling floats freely; in feeling happy, you direct the feeling to what is close by, smiling, for instance, at a person who

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<sup>42</sup> This particular example is not automatically affective, it could be a solely cognitive process rather than an affective one.

passes you by' (2010: 25). However, the labour that goes into creating these kinds of experiences is often overlooked and the employee's actual emotions become secondary. We see this in customer services roles but also in care roles; for example, the exhaustion and overworking of care professionals. The demand to appear happy when your life is precarious, when the very thing that contributes to making your life less comfortable is the thing demanding that you perform this happiness, is exhausting. It is through this feeling (amongst others) that solidarity and care become difficult to maintain. Our own happiness as employees is insignificant; however, were we more happy and more cared for, we would be able to inhabit the emotion much more easily, in the ways that Ahmed points to above.

Immaterial Labour: The context of immaterial labour sees a theoretical shift that moves away from a Marxist understanding of capital, with an emphasis on three interconnected factors: the exploitation of labour, value as the driving force for this exploitation, and how this connects to class separation (Amorim, 2014). Instead of an emphasis on labour in relation to the production line, immaterial labour places the knowledge economy at the centre. This mirrors working environments predominantly moving from the factory to the office. Italian sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato defines immaterial labour as 'the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity' (1996: 133). This form of labour refers to us as academics and artists, as it includes 'the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion' (Lazzarato, 1996: 133). Because these types of activity do not traditionally fit into ideas of what 'work' is, they become easy to exploit. This feeds into narratives around being continually busy, and to be consistently productive. The lines between work and life become blurry and unclear; there is no clocking in and out. As

Lazzarato articulates: ‘the old dichotomy between “mental and manual labour”, or between “material labour and immaterial labour”, risks failing to grasp the new nature of productive activity, which takes this separation on board and transforms it’ (1996: 133-134).

### ***Desires for Better Labour Conditions***

In discussion and reflection throughout our clocking in and out experiment for this element of our practice-as-research, we began to identify repeated moments of dissatisfaction, from which we were able to identify what we consider to be better labour conditions. We expressed these as:

- 1) Person Over Capital
- 2) Tenable Remuneration
- 3) Don’t Encourage disunity
- 4) Give Empathy

We recognise that the four statements do not function in the same way: ‘person over capital’ and ‘tenable remuneration’ are concepts, whereas ‘don’t encourage disunity’ and ‘give empathy’ are demands.<sup>43</sup> We have purposefully named these our ‘desires’ to reflect the connection to an imagined alternative future rather than a projected reality. These desires came about as a response to our experience of precarious labour, and they reflect our desire to improve these conditions. The desires are

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<sup>43</sup> Don’t encourage disunity and give empathy are both complete sentences that form instructions. However, person over capital and tenable remuneration are not complete, and contain no instructive element. However this grammatical difference is not important to us in relation to our performance writing. Whilst we analyse in this chapter these statements in relation to a context of manifestos (which require more concrete complete demands in order to be read and acted upon), our work as performance writing is not required to function in the same way. It is not attempting to change the world, it is attempting to help us make sense of our precarity and explore what performance writing can do for this.

presented as artistic statements. In devising the statements, we had to reflect on our own treatment and our treatment of others. These desires function as performance writing as they use writing to frame the performance moment (or action). They take aspects of our experience of work out of that context (as performance) and reframe this as a score like manifesto. Whether they are acted upon or not by a reader-audience, the desires aesthetically bring performance and writing together. The forms the performance writing take (i.e., their objectness, and in particular, the temporal qualities of the banner as discussed in this chapter) are intrinsically tied up with the content of the statements (its language and meaning) and the context in which the performance writing was devised.

When we started the clock in / clock out experiment I thought that it would be easy, I thought that a month would not feel very long and I imagined I could have done more - gone for longer. But after a few days, it started to feel routine and it felt like something I had to remember to do, something that occupied my time in a way that still was not particularly desirable to me. It felt forced, kind of like having to go to work. I think that it was kind of the perfect task to reflect on that feeling about a job that you don't really want to be doing. It feels forced and your days and the way that time is utilised kind of felt the same.

There is a connection between such desires and manifestos, in the sense that manifestos are the published intentions and goals of a specific individual, group or organisation. Manifestoes have a long history and connection to arts practice (for example, The Manifesto of Futurism, the list based posters of the Guerilla Girls, the Situationist International Manifesto). In the construction of these statements, we were influenced by *The Communist Manifesto* (1847) by Fredrich Engels and Karl Marx, in which they lay out ten ways they believe communist principles could be

implemented to improve life for the working class. Examples of these principles include:

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all right of inheritance.
4. Centralization of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.
5. Equal liability of all to labour. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture. (Engels and Marx, 2004: 32)

Although our desires are not as specific, there is a similarity in the way that they are developed from conditions of labour, how these might be made a little bit fairer and signal a potential for change without stating how to achieve it.

We used these artistic statements of desire as the basis for a trilogy of works that can sit together or independently from one another. These are: a series of cards, a booklet, and a knitted banner. Each of the works is intended to be experienced in a slightly different way, and share the characteristics of assemblage art in that experienced together the objects inform one another, and exist in relation to one another. The focus of this chapter is the banner (See Figure 4.2).

*A Brief History of Banners and Craftivism*



Figure 4.2: the banner from the series *Desires for Labour*. Photo credit: Rosy Whitmore.



The knitted banner, moving between concepts and instructional statements, functions as a means of slow protest. Through both its aesthetic and the language deployed, it can be read within a history of protest banners. This includes the nature of its construction, the slowness of its making and its relationship to a history of knitting as craft.

The 1799 Combination Act in Great Britain meant that workers' unions were illegal and so banners were careful to not identify the group to which they belonged (Trustram, 2011). The banner we made functions in this way also. This banner does not represent a trade union, and it does not function as a wall hanging that we display when we meet. We have been careful in our workplaces to not share too much about this research, due to the anxiety about conflict of interest. Whilst we are protected to an extent at work from unfair dismissal, we are currently easily replaceable. Our banner is intentionally vague with regards to our specific employers, as its intention is directed at labour systems that perpetuate precarity rather than a specific employer.

In 1825, the act was repealed, and large trade union banners that identified the union and the benefits of joining, alongside celebrating the skill of the trade, became more commonplace (Trustram, 2011). These were often painted on fabric with embroidered details and outsourced to George Tutill's banner factory, which produced three quarters of Britain's union banners after 1837 (Grace's Guide, 2018). Contemporary union banners are often outsourced to Ed Hall, who also made a number of banners in the same tradition for Jeremy Deller's *Procession* (2009) in Manchester (Hall, 2014). This work was commissioned as part of the 2009 edition of

the Manchester International Festival; Deller assembled a procession of the people of the city and their activities. Banners were designed to reflect group activity and were held by each group as they walked through the city centre. This highlights a strand of contemporary art practice that revolves around banners. For example, the 2021 Turner Prize winners *Array Collective* use banners within their work including whilst on demonstration (such as Pride 2017-2019, International Women's Day 2019, Save the NHS 2018).<sup>44</sup> In this sense banners can be understood to be an important tool in bringing together art and the political.

In contrast, the suffrage protest banners in Britain in the early 1900's were produced by the protesters, utilising the skills of the protestors, often being sewn and appliqued (Trustram, 2011). We find commonality with this method of making. We drew on our existing skills to make our *Desires for Labour* banner, as this was quicker and more effective (despite the slow labour involved) than learning a new skill. In late twentieth century and twenty-first century protests in the UK, protest signs often take the form of painted placards made of cardboard and wood as opposed to banners and are used during street marches. For example, at the 2003 anti-war in Iraq protests, the 2017 Women's March against the inauguration of Trump, the September 2019 Global Climate Strikes, and the 2020 Black Lives Matter and Trans Lives Matter protests.

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<sup>44</sup> See the collective's website for documentation of this [www.arraystudiosbelfast.com/rallies](http://www.arraystudiosbelfast.com/rallies)

We didn't set out to knit the banner to begin with, but rather with the time, resources, space and skills we had access to it was the easiest way for us to make this object. The main issue with sewing was lacking the space to do this well and the time to give to it. We are not the quickest or most confident at sewing. This approach - using existing skills - feeds into the idea of making things in a DIY way. Whilst knitting in itself can seem inaccessible, it can be taught with limited resources, and is portable. For others, it might be appropriate to translate how an object is made to a skill set that is appropriate for them. Our approach to making leaflets etc uses the skills and means we have, with the intention that without much you can make stuff. We have access to yarn and to paper and photocopying and Pritt Stick and tape. We don't have access to riso print and a large table for sewing. Other people making a similar project might choose different means based on where their skills and resources are.

Alongside the contemporary signs that are a familiar sight at marches, another slower form of protest has emerged since 2001 in the form of craftivism (Buszek and Roberson, 2001: 197). Craftivism is international (Corbett and Houselt, 2011: 346) and utilises skills such as sewing and knitting to make small items that are left in public spaces, with the intention of triggering processes of engagement with specific issues. As an open collective, craftivist methods offer alternative modes of activism and communication:

One of our "unique selling points" is that we are agitators with short clear messages, using craft in a very visual way. Therefore we reach a different audience than the average activist group and can hopefully spread our message into sectors of society that more aggressive activists simply cannot reach. (Corbett and Houselt, 2011: 349)

Craftivists intend to reach those who may not want or be able to access more traditional activist routes, targeting 'people who may not already be activists, who may be nervous of the somewhat loaded term activist but who still want to make a positive difference' (Corbett and Houselt, 2011: 347). The mode that craftivism takes

is engaged with gentle acts of making, which we connect to a resistance to capitalism through the utilisation of time, duration and pleasure.

To begin with we were noting the hours spent knitting so we could translate that into the wage we'd get at our shit jobs. But this then just added to our own labour when obviously we weren't getting paid anyway. And, we kept forgetting to do it, so eventually we stopped. Though we would have liked to know what our time translated to financially, whilst making it this ended up feeling irrelevant as the subjectivity of this time differed from the time we are paid for.

The crafts that we make as a part of this research project produce a form of culture through the materiality of the objects; the banner is rich with meaning. This view sits in connection to the historical use and function of crafts. As Jack Bratich articulates, 'craft-work has historically been performed as a gift-giving practice and a form of care for others (kin, children, spouses, friends). The material object is produced out of, and for, community relationships. In this way craftwork is saturated with use-value' (2010: 306).

*Desires for Labour* repeats the four statements (Person Over Capital, Tenable Remuneration, Don't Encourage Disunity, Give Empathy) throughout its different component parts. For the banner, the mode in which it is made (knitting), the materiality of the object (the banner, though we call it that and read it that way, it could also be interpreted as a blanket or scarf or a piece of fabric), and its use of text all inform one another. Whilst, as we discuss below, knitting has its own temporal experience that we derive pleasure from (and offers a way of slowing down time, which we argue holds anti-capitalist value), it also is an Arendtian 'work' object that was a task completed (knitting the banner). Furthermore, the banner is an actant as

it sits separately from our identities as the people who made it; it is an object to be collaborated with and will be used and interpreted through that collaboration, as one aspect in a series of relations forming an assemblage. As discussed in Chapter Three, actants possess a performativity and agency, and we argue the banner operates in this way, its 'thing-power' informing how the banner is used and interpreted (Arts Unimelb, 2017). As performance writing, it consists of both the form of writing (the text) and its materiality of the object. For us, the materiality of the banner *as a banner* comes through the experiences we have had: it informs the intention of what we have made and how we interpret what we've made. For others, the object will be informed in collaboration with its materiality and their own experiences.

### ***Subjectivity and Time***

Bergson's concept of duration reveals that temporality is the experience of difference (Bergson, 1911: 12). Deleuze writes that duration ' "tends" for its part to take on or bear all the differences in kind (because it is endowed with the power of qualitatively varying with itself)' (1988: 31). The experience of time is for one moment to be different to the next; that something itself is different one moment to the next. This experience of temporality became particularly apparent during the making process of the banner.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The words on the banner use the same four phrases used throughout *Desires for Labour* and as such came from our observations during the time we spent clocking in and out of our shit jobs, and recording our emotional responses to work each day. This included ways we snuck in our 'own' time to work, and how we felt about four aspects of labour (emotional, domestic, educational, employment). The phrases we devised were in response to the needs we felt weren't being met; they describe how we felt we experienced precarity in our jobs at that time.

In contrast to the experiences we had at our shit jobs, where time dragged and we would find ways to resist this dragging of time (through games, through checking emails and conversation), making the banner was a slow process, where instead of having to attempt to speed up time, making the object became the act of resistance, to slow down time. There were moments this became an issue - as we approached a deadline for an exhibition,<sup>46</sup> we were running out of time, and so knitting was no longer a slow pleasurable activity but something that was carried everywhere, into social time, in order to be completed. Therefore, the banner went from a purposeful pleasurable activity with an inherent slowness to it, to another job, one where it felt there was never enough time and which impacted how we used our 'free' time. But on the whole, the experience of knitting was not felt through the measurement of clocked time (other than maybe, divided up into lengths of TV shows or radio programmes or podcasts). The experience of knitting was one of duration; rather than counting down the minutes until our labour was done, time – and how fast or slow this felt – was experienced through the task of knitting.

This highlights the following:

1. The subjectivity of time
2. The relationship between precarity and time
3. The importance of time and pleasure as resistant strategies
4. How time is experienced within labour and work

Bergson articulates a distinction between 'clocked time' and duration. According to Bergson, duration is a more subjective and individual experience of time and is

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<sup>46</sup> The banner was exhibited as part of the Practice-as-Research Gallery at the Theatre & Performance Research Association annual conference at the University of Exeter in 2019.

closely linked to humanity's impetus to creativity. He explains how time, as experienced as duration, is a multiplicity of different presences:

For our duration is not merely one instant replacing another: if it were, there would never be anything but the present -- no prolonging of the past into the actual, no evolution, no concrete duration. Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances.  
(Bergson, 1911: 12)

Through experiencing time in this way (here, by the making of the banner) something is revealed to us about the difference in time, that there is no experience of the present as 'now' time, presence is multiple, it is both the past and the future rolled into one.

Deleuze also draws on Bergson's theory of duration in his articulation of the differential present and continual becoming:

Bergson's famous formulation, "I must wait until the sugar dissolves' has a still broader meaning than is given to it by its context. It signifies that my own duration, such as I live it in the impatience of waiting, for example, serves to reveal other durations that beat to other rhythms, that differ in kind from my own. Duration is always the location of the environment of differences in kind; it is even their totality and multiplicity (1988: 32).

This understanding of duration allows us to understand our existence as a multiplicity. Making the banner allows us to own our own experiences of work and labour. As Deleuze articulates above, objects have their own agency – and as such their own duration. The banner has its own duration in making, one that we were required to wait for. We had to work *with* the banner, to give it time to develop and to become its own thing – we were only able to make the banner at a pace that it allowed us to. These connections result from the recognition of differences between ourselves as makers, our own individual difference (from moment to moment and

how we experience time) and the difference between us and the people who encounter the work. This opens up a potential space of encounter – and an opportunity to think differently about how we interact with the world.

The experience of subjectivity of time is more than two moments of the same length *feeling* different, or of duration allowing us to notice difference within time. There is an economic aspect to the subjectivity of time. Under capitalism, time becomes transactional. Playing a silly game with colleagues at work is more than making time pass; it becomes an act of resistance against an external force that has deemed your time has a particular economic value.

Knitting is an activity that kind of takes you away from overthinking and at the same time it lends itself to thinking. The phrases we chose had in hindsight been chosen relatively quickly based off the process work we'd done. Knitting them took time, and so we spent time with these phrases. Knitting them became an act of re-writing, as their meanings became mutable, changing daily as our feelings about the types of labour we perform changed daily. By the end, we couldn't be clear about what the phrases mean.

Writing about durational performance, Lara Shalson states:

As time becomes money, speed becomes crucial to making the most of this fixed and otherwise unit. Technological advancements, which speed up processes of production, transportation and communication, are thus key to the rise of industrial capitalism. Importantly, the speed enabled by such technologies does not shorten the workday or produce an increase in leisure time. (Shalson, 2012: 100)

Choosing to participate in a slow craft in order to make an object responds to Shalson's assertion that 'making the most of one's time becomes a moral and economic imperative' (2012: 100). On the one hand, the slowness of knitting resists the capitalist economic imperative to make use of one's time. Allowing oneself to



experience duration in this way seems to resist a monetised experience of time. On the other hand, using time to make something means we are still trading time for an object – even if the goal was only to experience the pleasure of making, again complicated further as the object has been made in part fulfilment of a PhD (that exists in a capitalist model of education). We also wish to note that whilst it is possible to experience a craft such as knitting outside of the mechanics of capitalism,<sup>47</sup> we bought the materials to make this (cheaply), and do not know what production models went into this.

### ***Pleasure, Resistance, and Time***

In this final section, we demonstrate the relationship between pleasure, labour, resistance and time as it relates to our experience of making practice. We have always thought about our practice in relation to whether or not we have gotten enjoyment from it and here we reflect on the reasons why this is an important measurement. Franco 'Bifo' Berardi describes the effect of capitalism on the body as a violence. In a 2015 interview, he describes the motive of capitalism as growth, leading to a future of “more and more”: ‘the future is energy: more and more and more. More speed, more strength, more consumption, more things, more violence’ (Arts & Education, 2015: 00.38).

Berardi opposes ideas of the modern future - of financial growth, aggressiveness, and violence – in favour of a gentler energy of enjoying what we have, which he

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<sup>47</sup> For example, someone could choose to gather, spin and dye their own wool using natural processes and materials, though these are time consuming activities and there is also an element of privilege in UK to have the economic means and time to produce your own fibre for knitting, and there are cheaper ways of accessing knitting.

goes on to describe as using slowness as a resistance to capitalism. He does this by offering three definitions, to the terms 'post futurism', 'ungrowth' and 'precarisation'; we discuss each of these in turn in this section:

Post futurism: We can see the destruction of the possibilities that modernity has created. We see it in the dictatorship of the financial economy. The financial economy is destroying intelligence, destroying public schools, is destroying creativity, is destroying the environment, is destroying water, everything has to be sacrificed to growth. (Arts & Education, 2015: 05.24).

He goes on to talk about how the tool of capitalism is the workers' time and introduces the idea of using time as a resistant act, suggesting living in a post-futurist way; that is, to try and undo the damage that this way of understanding the world through growth has done.

In order to achieve this, he suggests three things: 1) we must choose slowness towards pleasure, 2) that we need pleasure in order to live well and 3) that time is not something that we can accumulate; we need to enjoy the experience of becoming other (Arts & Education, 2015, 06.45). Capitalism is not interested in the body of the worker, and so the worker becomes alienated from their body. The experience of time through a twenty-four-hour day is not in response to the needs of the body in that time; instead, it is in response to the needs of capitalism. A simple example of this could be the way breaks (food, toilet, cigarette breaks) are monitored in our shit jobs. This means the worker is in a relationship with trading time and claiming time; time never belongs to the worker; time is outside of their own pleasure.

Making the banner, on the other hand (and all the objects we make as performance writing) connect us to our bodies through their handmade-ness, and to how our bodies experience time. Even when feeling the pressure of time to get the banner finished, we were still able to respond to our bodily needs and have autonomy over that. Making the banner was the antithesis of a shift in our hospitality jobs. Even when making bled into our social lives – and the potential for exploitation that would have if making the banner was a monetised task (i.e., having to work whilst socialising), we framed this instead as being able to socialise whilst working (as opposed to having to work whilst socialising). This emphasis was possible because of the autonomy we had over our bodies and ourselves in this task. Berardi's definition of precarisation highlights this relationship with time:

Work is becoming an infinite sea of fragments of abstract time; recombinable fragments, fractals of time, or working time, of intellectual working time, connecting together in the networked machine. So, the capitalist does not need to buy you, your person. You have rights, you have a family and union. So, capitalism does not need you anymore. He needs your time. We are fragments of time; this is precarisation. (Arts & Education, 2015: 14.23)

Berardi suggests the way to respond to this demand on our time is to use pleasure as a resistant strategy; to listen to the needs of the body and to our social needs; and to reposition our relationship with time to be one of using time for pleasure, rather than existing in fragments of time for the benefit of capitalist growth. He defines this as 'ungrowth': the need for more time and for more joy. In order to work a way through this, 'the problem now is not to restart growth, the problem now is to find a way to enjoy what we have already got, and to develop the possibility of self-care, of self-therapy, of self-education. Society has to come out of the obsession of growth' (Berardi, 2015). Ungrowth refers to a need for more life and more time, away

from work and away from the machine of capitalism. Berardi emphasises the importance of the distinction between desire and pleasure when he writes about evolving from the violence of capitalism:

Evolution must be rethought from scratch, from the point of view of the relationship between desire and pleasure. Pleasure is the goal, the aspiration. Over the past forty years, I forgot about pleasure because I was obsessed with desire, but now I understand that the way out of capitalism is the opposite: the way out is not desire, it is pleasure. (Berardi, 2020: 7)

We stated earlier in this chapter that we used the word 'desire' in this work in relation to an imagined alternative future, away from our projected reality. Here, desire refers to the future: of wanting something, whereas pleasure is experienced in the moment. This presents a tension between how pleasure was revealed through making the banner, with the use of the term desire in its writing, and how this contains a sense of lacking and wanting (looking to the future). Perhaps if we focus less on those desires for the future we could ironically meet those desires by focusing on pleasure now. Or it could mean we are struggling to fully conceptually meet Berardi's shift from desire to pleasure, which is not unreasonable given how ingrained the mindset of capitalism is. This is not to say that life should only be for pleasure; caring for and living and working with others means considering others' needs in relation to our own. We exist within a capitalist economy, and we all still need to survive within its mechanisms. Within that, it is feasible that being able to have time and space for pleasure is currently a privilege.

### ***Conclusion***

The work discussed in this chapter helped us understand that performance writing has a duration, or is durational. Duration is a constant becoming. Action is constantly

in process (so long as the activity is sustained), but action cannot be 'completed', Arendt describes this as 'boundless' stating 'Since action acts upon beings who are capable of their own actions, reactions, apart from being a response, is always a new action that strikes out on its own and affects others' (Arendt, 1998: 190).

Therefore, both duration and action, as is the self, are multiple. A space of appearance is dependent on the action to be sustained; it 'disappears not only with the dispersal of men (...) but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves' (Arendt, 1998: 199). Whilst labour constantly consumes itself and work has a definitive end, a space of appearance exists insofar as action allows it to exist, and ends once the activities sustaining action end (1998: 199). Action, as discussed, is a potential, one that might not change anything, it might uphold the status quo but it offers potential and as such is political. (1998: 199). This is in how it is made but it also refers to how it continues once it is made, and how its status as an actant allows this. We expand on this idea in Chapter Five, where we discuss *Desires for Labour* more as an assemblage and how this offers potential.

Reflecting on our experience of time within our employment gave us a framework to understand how our performance writing sits in opposition to our experience of employment, and how making performance writing gives us ways to both resist that experience (through a slowing down of time) and allows us to experience time and work in another way. It allowed us a way to contextualise and experience pleasure in making, and as such build on our understanding of what performance writing can do and how it operates in its making. Whereas in our experience of paid employment our identity is secondary to the need to be 'good' employees in order to keep our jobs and be paid, in performance writing our identity is secondary to the object made,

not because we do not or can not influence the outcome of what is made but because the individual aspects of identities are not central to the objects being interacted with or read by others (though our shared identities and experiences as precarious workers are central to what we have made). However, as this PhD is concerned with making rather than reception, in making we were able to practise ways of experiencing labour and work that resisted how we experience these at our jobs.

*Desires for Labour* began with us thinking about our labour conditions and finding ways to resist (such as through games) or finding ways to document it (through the clocking in and out exercise) or noting when we were overworked (checking emails for one job whilst on the loo at another job). Knitting the banner was a slow time-based process that is both work and an opportunity to experience duration. It offered a route to slowness. This is one means of using time and pleasure as a resistant act. Whilst we have used the banner to illustrate this in this chapter, the use of craft throughout the process is integral to this sense of slowness, in taking pleasure in making performance writing, and the relation between this process, the object made, and the text.

I really enjoyed making the pattern. I enjoyed designing the letters. At the time the final season of *Game of Thrones* was airing and I had never got into the programme, so I decided to put the 1st season on in the background whilst drawing the pattern out. I did not enjoy *Game of Thrones* at all, but it felt like I got to find that out without wasting time on finding out I don't like it.

Whilst for many, including us, craft still sits within a capitalist economy (we do not make our own yarn, we do not make our own dyes for it, we have no relationship to the manufacturing processes and what exploitations they may involve), there is

space to use the process of making to sit outside of a consumption and commodification-based culture.

To date, we have tended to make one copy or limited copies of the practice part of this PhD. We have made one *House Box*, one banner, and a limited number of leaflets and cards, that were made in one go. As such, interacting with the objects tends to mean sharing them. They are passed on – including for us as the makers, they are passed between ourselves. Making in this way renders smaller the ‘desire’ aspect of capitalism and allows space for pleasure through the connections to slowing time via craft, and the bodily autonomy in this. Making can still mean desire towards something, but gratification is delayed, and the activity of making is pleasure in waiting. Rather than, in Berardi’s description, of living in a state of desire with the delayed experience of pleasure, making performance writing (and using craft techniques as part of this) has allowed living in a state of pleasure with the delayed experience of desire.<sup>48</sup>

This chapter brings together the temporal qualities of performance writing with the temporal qualities of precarity (specifically as this relates to our experience of employment). In doing this, the chapter begins to address our third aim of analysing hope within millennial precarity. It suggests how the process of performance writing might offer a mode of slow pleasure that might interrogate and change our relationship with our social, economic and cultural position.

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<sup>48</sup> For example, as we write the first draft of this chapter, we are in the first lockdown of 2020 due to Covid-19, and we are making clothes: in part because we desire new clothes and in part because of the pleasure of the activity and the experienced duration of the activity during this moment in our lives where time has been reconfigured.

## Chapter Five:

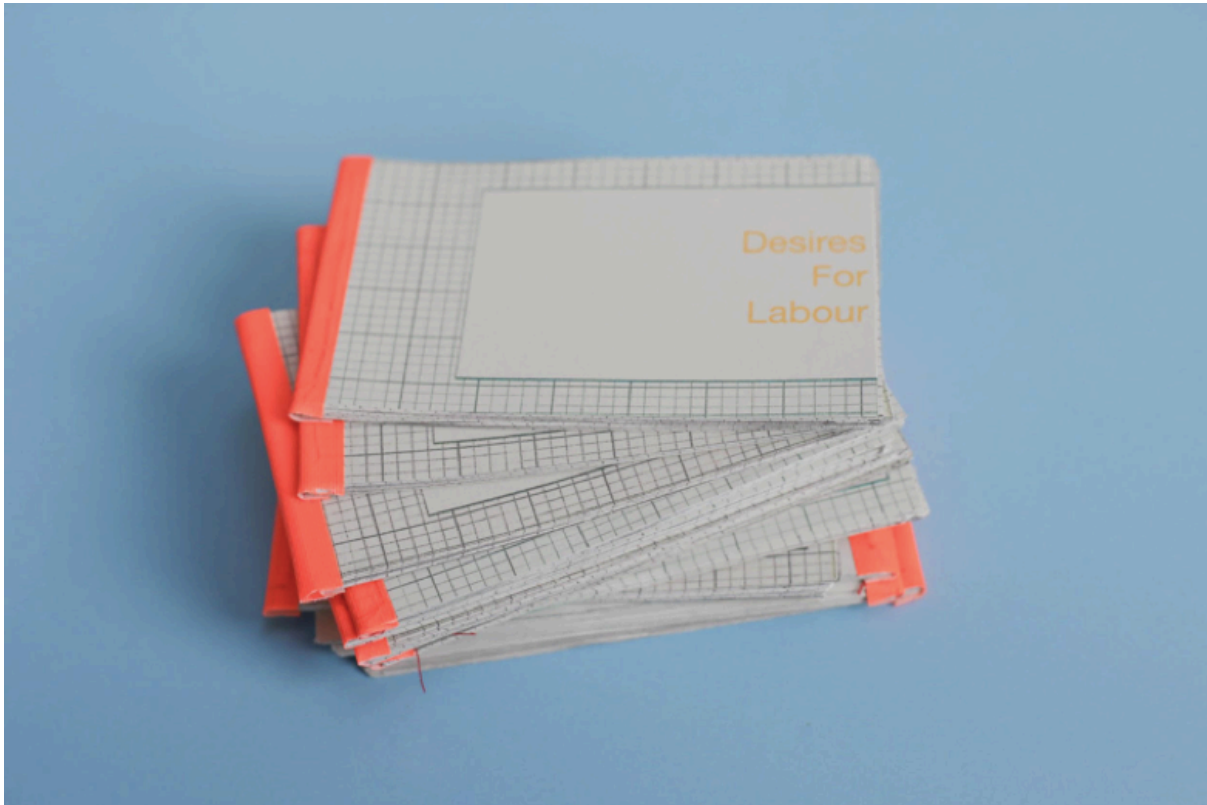
### From Assemblages to Objects

Please now engage with the zines and event score cards that form a part of the trilogy for *Desires for Labour*.

By considering the relationship between objects and potential, this chapter explores how performance writing might look to the future, and find hope in the face of precarity. We return to the concept of assemblage, and its multiple unfixed meanings, as a means to reveal that which is hidden in performance writing, through *Desires for Labour*. We refer again to definitions offered by Hannah Arendt to analyse how making objects (production), and the objects themselves, relate to our experiences of employment. This chapter also clarifies the position of the research as being concerned with making performance writing (with the audience in mind and using literary theory within this) as opposed to audience reception.



## ***The Objects and Text***



**Figure 5.1: Stack of Zines. Photo Credit: Rosy Whittemore**

The zines (see Figure 5.1) were made during the same period that the banner was being knitted (during early 2019) but are much smaller in size, so they are portable and fit in a pocket. They have been produced using a DIY approach and were printed on a domestic (non-professional) printer at our houses, hand cut, photocopied and hand bound. The zines connect to the banner, by using the same phrases and explaining what we as artists interpret these phrases to mean. For example:

Person over capital:

A system that values the person over capital.

Real acknowledgment of how work impacts on life, and life on work.

Managerial decisions to be made on the basis of how they will impact the individual, that do not treat people as objects of capital. For example, zero hour and fixed term contracts should be mutually beneficial.

Profit should not come before human need. The individual needs sufficient and meaningful breaks, food and liquid to sustain their work. Working patterns should not inhibit health. Emotion should be recognised and accepted. Workers should be able to care for their bodies and minds whilst working, with the support of healthy working patterns.

Support for your health that allows you to be treated with dignity and not as having failed others if your health fails you.<sup>49</sup>

We chose these phrases used in *Desires for Labour* over similar phrases relating to our specific experience of employment. For example, we chose to use *Don't Encourage Disunity* instead of the shorter *Encourage Unity* as a direct response to an environment that pits colleagues against one another, for the ease of management / running the business.<sup>50</sup> It feels to us like too much of a leap of imagination to encourage unity, so instead we ask to not be pitted in competition against colleagues. It's easy to get annoyed with colleagues and friends at work when something isn't done, but we want to make sure we are taking into account the following: have my colleagues and I received enough training? Have we been given enough staff on the rota today to work with? Is anyone being paid enough to care? Is it realistic to expect other aspects of my colleagues' lives to not impact how they are at work today?

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<sup>49</sup> In hindsight, if we were making this work again, some of the language would change. We would replace the word 'individual' with 'worker'. This is in part because we approach theory and practice (including daily life) from a collaborative perspective, partly because of shared privileges that outweigh how we feel about our individual precarities (referring solely to ourselves here), and also because of capitalism's emphasis on individualism that we believe is detrimental to the health of the worker and communities – and to emphasise the history and importance of the term 'worker' in relation to labour rights.

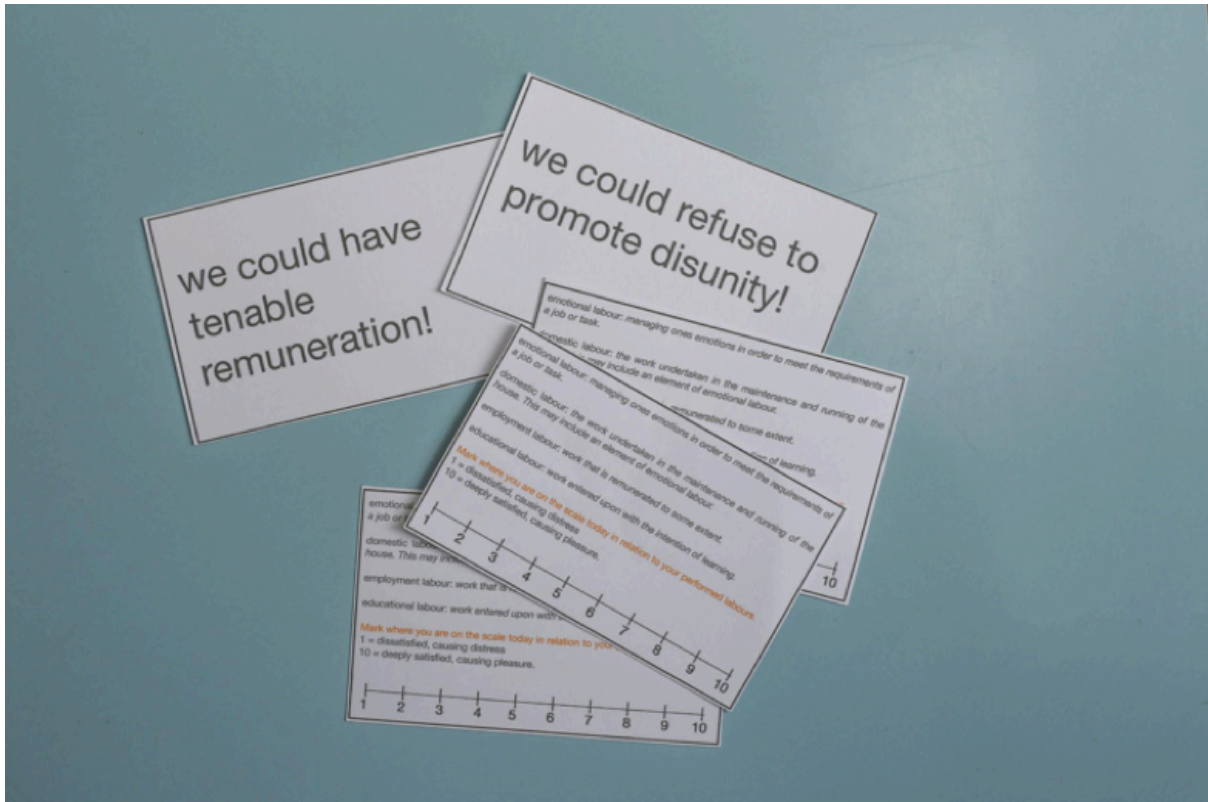
<sup>50</sup> Examples in our workplaces include: employee of the month schemes, secrecy around available hours and hourly rate, giving some staff preferential hours.

Zines share some aesthetic qualities of collage art, often made using a cut and paste method of arranging together collected materials. Historically, zines were a way for like-minded people to create content and share amongst each other, this meant that audiences were often limited to specific groups. Zines have been popular with sub and under cultural movements. Stephen Duncombe describes zines as 'non-commercial, non-professional, small circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish and distribute themselves' (Duncombe, 2008: 10-11). Our own zines fit into this description. We have circulated our zines amongst friends and sell them through The Good Press in Glasgow (a collectively owned and managed open submission book shop). Therefore, the reach of these zines is still limited to either selected audiences or people who shop at The Good Press. The zine has a social element to it, as the material in the zine was generated through our experiences shared with colleagues and it was constructed with the help of friends (to make more copies quickly; we discuss this below).



**Figure 5.2: Labour Pleasure Index. Photo Credit: Rosy Whittemore**

The zines begin with the section unpacking the 'desire' phrases. The next section is the 'Labour Pleasure Index' (see Figure 5.2), which asks readers to mark on a scale how they feel about their various labours. Next is a section on workplace games to play as a resistance to the employer (and as a resistance to boredom at work). These are written versions of games collectively developed with colleagues, always being altered and adjusted as colleagues leave the job and new colleagues join. The games do have the potential to cause employees to be more pliable at work, through this inadvertent team building that potentially creates enthusiastic workers (through this social dynamic) to reinforce labour dynamics. For us, it matters that the emphasis is on this being led by staff as addressing staff needs (rather than as a management strategy to increase workplace productivity), and in these particular workplaces it does not negate how employees (ourselves and our friends) feel about the job. If the zines were developed out of a different workplace experience, it might not have resulted in a games section. The final section is about the knitting pattern for the banner, with some notes on this and each leaflet ending with a different letter of the banner drawn out on knitting graph paper.



**Figure 5.3: Cards. Photo Credit: Rosy Whittemore.**

The cards (see Figure 5.3) are double sided and are the size of a calling or business card. These cards are intended to be able to function both alongside the other two pieces of work, as well as independently (existing as a part of the assemblage). The texts address readers directly with phrases and propositions such as ‘we could have tenable remuneration!’ and ‘we could refuse to promote disunity!’ The cards function as a snapshot of the *Desires for Labour* experimentation phase; and summarise how we felt during that period prior to making this performance writing. The more direct propositions act as reminders to ourselves as the artists that this is our desire in making this work and using the Labour Pleasure Index ourselves helped focus our attention on how we felt dissatisfied in our workplaces and in the types of labour we experience. Reader-audience members are invited to score how they feel about the four types of work (discussed in the previous chapter: emotional, immaterial, educational and domestic labour). The pleasure we felt in relation to our various

labours is what was most important to us on a day-to-day basis. Our sense of pleasure is informed by various factors, such as the enjoyment of a particular task, the social aspect of being with colleagues, a sense of whether the work was contributing to a sense of security or a sense of precarity, and our satisfaction with our work (for example, if we felt we were productive in a way that matters to ourselves rather than our employers).

### ***The Means of Production (reproducibility of objects)***

We found the task of making the zines was akin to Arendt's realm of work, where '*working*, whose end has come when the object is finished, ready to be added to the common world of things' rather than labour 'which is prescribed by the biological process of the living organism and the end of its "toil and trouble" comes only with the death of his organism' (original emphasis, Arendt, 1998: 98). Whilst labour and work create and maintain the world and so are connected to life, just as action is (Arendt refers to this as natality) (Arendt, 1998: 9), for Arendt it is only action where identity can be disclosed as to *who* someone is as distinct from *what* someone is (Arendt, 1998: 179). Both labour and work share the quality that, in neither can the self-distinguish who they are from what they are. This task involved an end, which was a finished object, as opposed to a set number of hours on a production line repeating the same task, day after day, and our focus was on completing the task. We were aided here by friends,<sup>51</sup> who were 'doing' work, but our friends' identities weren't supplanted by this activity of work. We also did not ask for our friends to help

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<sup>51</sup> The printing and cutting we did ourselves beforehand: had we not had help we would have still made the same number of zines, it just would have taken longer. A friend suggested we bind the zines as a group to make them more quickly.

in the construction for free, this was offered out of friendship and on the understanding that other 'in kind' labour is generally being reciprocated.<sup>52</sup>

There are multiple copies of the zines and the cards. In the previous chapter we discussed the time consuming and costly process of knitting the banner. The remaining two works in the *Desires for Labour* trilogy took significantly less time to create, meaning we were able to make many more copies. The production of the zines and cards is limited more by our access to resources, rather than to the labour hours they take to create. We would in theory be able to make as many copies of them as our access to paper and printing ink would allow. Although a printer and scanner were used to create both the zines and the cards there was still a process of manual labour in their creation. This was a very DIY process<sup>53</sup>, with the elements of the design decided by eye and a process of cutting and sticking and then recopying keeping within the tradition of zine making.

The back cover of each zine has a different letter of the knitting pattern. We produced eighty-five booklets to match the number of different letters used in the banner, so in theory using all eighty-five zines together would enable someone to recreate the banner. There is also an invitation to email us to get the full knitting

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<sup>52</sup> We assume based on the social dynamic we have with these friends that this was something people felt they could join and leave as they wanted to (as opposed to fulfilling a quota of hours of work). However, our friends autonomy in this task was reduced insofar as we (Katheryn and Chris) had made all creative decisions and our friends were operating within the decisions we had made. We justify having this help by ensuring no one felt they had to do this work if they didn't want to.

<sup>53</sup> DIY stands for Do-It-Yourself and refers to making, mending, repairing, building and so on yourself, rather than outsourcing this to a professional. We refer to the process of making our performance writing as DIY because we (for example) bound and printed our zines without the use of professional printers. We personally lack knowledge and skill in using publishing software, and so formatted the page layout by hand by literally cutting sections and text and laying them out before scanning and printing the pages. As such, our work has a particular aesthetic quality that we wouldn't be able to replicate if we didn't use this DIY approach.

pattern. This leads us (as the artists) to imagine more banners, or a potential for collective action if people knit one letter each and patchworked this together into a banner.

Performance writing can take on multiple cultural meanings. For Adrian Piper's work *My Calling Card* (1986-90) the artist distributed cards to people within contexts where a specific type of interaction might take place, such as a bar. These were environments where Piper might be (or had been) subject to racism, where perhaps the person(s) who committed the act of racism might not be aware of or frame their actions as racist; environments where Piper's experience and subjectivity are erased. These cards then act as an invitation for those who receive them to change their behaviour towards her. The cultural meaning of these cards isn't dependent on them being free or their materiality; this comes from what the cards do as objects and the context in which the cards function. This is an example of the text on the card, from Adrian Piper's, *My Calling (Card) #1 (for Dinners and Cocktail Parties)*, 1986-1990:

Dear Friend,

I am black.

I am sure you did not realize this when you made/laughed at/agreed with that racist remark. In the past, I have attempted to alert white people to my racial identity in advance. Unfortunately, this invariably causes them to react to me as pushy, manipulative, or socially inappropriate. Therefore, my policy is to assume that white people do not make these remarks, even when they believe there are no black people present, and to distribute this card when they do.

I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me.

Reproduced in Marriott (2013: 2).



David Marriott analyses *My Calling Card* as being about racial etiquette. He discusses the importance for Piper as to whether someone accepts or refuses receiving a card, and how this act in conjunction with the written message is intended to make the person receiving a card reflect on their own attitudes: i.e., to reflect on their own feelings about racism (Marriott, 2013: 3). As such, as much as the work concerns the identity of Piper, it is also about the subjectivity of the person who encounters Piper and *My Calling Card*. Marriott writes that the cards, 'show how racism in American social life can itself be exchanged again and again, and especially when the targets of such violence are denied any symbolic equivalence as presences' (2013: 2). Piper's physical presence in the work in relation to the text – physically handing out the cards at places where her presence, experience and subjectivity has been denied in order to preserve whiteness and a white worldview or a white interpretation of black experience – places the reader-audience members' subjectivity in relation to Piper's. Making visible this relation holds the potential to make visible the repeated social reproduction of racism.

*Desires for Labour* does not test reader-audience members subjectivity in the same way, as we are not physically present in the work and our work is not directly challenging anyone who (re)produces our experience of precarity. What *Desires for Labour* reveals to us is that we do not *actually* know what the encounter with the performance writing means for a reader-audience, as we focus instead on the encounter between ourselves as artists and the text, and what the encounter between the text and ourselves in composing and making the work means for us. We imagined that someone measuring their pleasure in relation to their work would mean something to an audience *because* it meant something to us. We imagined

reading our performance writing would make readers feel connected to others because *making* it made us feel connected to others. Performance writing offers a mode of imagining change, but that might begin and end with the person(s) making the performance writing.

The continuing shift to the digital means many more people have access to certain types of information; it is almost possible to see an image of an artwork from any place and at any time. This super abundance of information resonates with Berardi's observation of capitalisms' need for more, more, more. In this moment of hyperconnectivity, having something physical to take away from an art exhibition or to have something delivered to your house that you can keep is something that the two of us place value on. During a period of enforced isolation (The initial UK lockdown between 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 — 4<sup>th</sup> July 2020<sup>54</sup> of the Covid pandemic in the UK) where live events were not permitted and all but very few engagements with art and culture have been through a screen, Cell Project Space launched *Queer Correspondence* (2020) which they describe as, 'a mail-art initiative that seeks to nurture the indeterminate spaces of possibilities that are put forward by subcultural values' (Cell Project Space, 2020). Each month for the duration of the project an artist was commissioned to make work, this was then sent to those on the mailing list. This created a possibility for connecting with others and for those who are isolated to feel a sense of community, one where text becomes a way to connect without any evidence of the impact of that connection. We find this useful to consider in relation to the zines and the elements of the zine that suggest interaction (such as

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<sup>54</sup> There were some easing of restrictions before this date, however, 4<sup>th</sup> July refers to when hospitality businesses could reopen, and is relevant to us because of the nature of our work.

the Labour Pleasure Index, and the knitting pattern). When we think about this performance writing as the authors, we imagine people encountering the work. For us to feel a sense of potential or togetherness through this work, we do not need to know that it is encountered by an audience. Instead, it is making the work that fosters these processes of imagination. This is one of the fundamental elements of our definition of performance writing.

### ***Labour Pleasure Index***

The invitation printed on the *Labour Pleasure Index* asks for a reflection on the labour that one performs and how much one is satisfied by the work that they do. This provocation might suggest something destructive; for example, if acted upon there may become a moment where what we are prepared to put up with and what conditions we are willing to accept might be challenged. We continue to be in a relation to work even though we are hurt by it, when at times accessing the means of survival can cause us harm (emotionally and physically). The *Labour Pleasure Index* read in conjunction with the phrases on the banner or the similar phrases on the cards suggests that there is a particular aim with the index – the emphasis becomes on the ways we are dissatisfied rather than the ways we are satisfied. In this sense, we have marked the performance writing with aspects of our identity (specifically, our feelings about our work and our experience of precarity), despite not being present when the work is engaged with. However, if we return to the understandings we form as the makers of the work, as opposed to the receivers of the work, then we begin to reflect on connections we make between the phrases (e.g., ‘Don’t Encourage Disunity’) and how we felt about the particular aspects of our work on any given day. We (the artists) are able to use this as a starting point to imagine something

different. The significance here is on the potential. Whilst a marking of our hauntological experience is that we struggle to understand how to enact change or the logistics of changing our experience in the workplace, we found we began to imagine (for example) a more supportive environment. As such, we were able to consider our subjectivity in this. For example, we initially interpreted 'don't encourage disunity' in relation to the ways that hierarchical structures pit us against our colleagues and make us feel unsupported from above. However, we began to consider the ways we act in relation to our colleagues. For example, if we have a frustrating shift where we feel more pressure on us or feel frustrated with our colleagues for not sharing the workload, this might not come from us directly not being supported but may come from our colleagues not receiving support or training. Therefore, there are ways we can approach this with a sense of togetherness and mutual support: how can we assist our colleagues in their work? Is there anything we are doing that is making this work more difficult? Are we communicating effectively with our colleagues? Then perhaps there is a scenario where we can reframe the relationship with our bosses too. The context is key to this, in borrowing from our experiences (and feelings) at our jobs and translating this into our devised phrases. Just as our definition of performance emphasises the significance of intention, of something demarcated from daily life and framed as performance; we frame this series of performance writings as having potential relating to precarity because they are framed as being about precarity. We are not offering a handbook on how to resist employment practices or how to approach work radically, but we are offering a mode of thinking through our relationship to these aspects of precarity.

The *Labour Pleasure Index* invites multiple answers and can be any number between one and ten. How someone regards the scoring system, and the scores

they give to similar emotions or experiences is subjective. The scoring system is also subjective for everyone on a day to day, moment to moment basis depending on any number of other factors that influence someone's way of scoring. The potential here is to reduce a flattening of meaning through this aesthetic quality and open space for multiple complex interpretations to co-exist. Multiple different components are brought together and exist in relation to one another; the meaning of the individual components may be changed by this relation, as Deleuze states '[i]n assemblages you find states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, hodgepodes; but you also find utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs. The relations between the two are pretty complex' (2007: 176). The way of scoring on the Labour Pleasure Index has the potential to be an assemblage existing in relation to a series of heterogeneous responses, emotions and experiences. The method of scoring is unfixed (and cannot be 'secured') despite assigning a number to the reader-audiences feelings. When making the work – devising the index and 'playing' with it – we found the meaning of the *Labour Pleasure Index* changes dependent on what it is brought in relation to; i.e., various amorphous states that influence one another: our experiences as a worker, the physical and emotional factors affecting us on any given day, the role that we play (moving between professions and the different hierarchies within those professions), our ability to complete a task (based on the complexity of the task or the time allocated for it for instance), the financial comfort that the work allows (this is not an exhaustive list). Scoring brought attention to how these different states affect our wellbeing. This offers the political potential for a diversity of approaches, ideas, and inclusion, as the framework of an assemblage reveals its parts as multiple and the relations between parts as unfixed.

Within neoliberalism, the assemblage has the potential to make visible hidden labours through acknowledgement that the visible did not arrive at its status fully formed. In terms of our hospitality jobs, to consider our places of work as an assemblage reveals more than our job titles allow. On the surface there is a relation between the drinks we are making, the money we take, the customer we are serving, the uniform we are wearing and whether it is comfortable that day, the temperature at work (and so on) – these tangible things are fairly visible and apparent. A theory of assemblage though allows a shift of focus on the ‘invisible’. In this example it includes the emotional and immaterial labour performed, the health of our bodies, and the context of our (the authors’) focus on the lived experience of the economic mechanisms in these workplaces. These things are multiple – just as the self is multiple, always changing, always becoming, so a theory of assemblage allows us to prioritise unfixed, multiple and in-process meanings. This means that aesthetically an assemblage is also open to possibilities and potentialities as much as it is to what we might regard as real and present. Making performance writing sits in relation to this. The actions that the text might imply are multiple and are re-encountered in the process of writing and making as much as they are when a new reader encounters it.

The idea of assemblages also extends to how we perceive objects. In writing about queer phenomenology (the queer experience of being in the world), Sara Ahmed details how we perceive the world in relation to objects, describing how we encounter objects and are changed by our perception and relationship to them. She notes that:

perception is a way of facing something. I can perceive an object only insofar as my orientation allows me to see it (it must be near enough to me, which in turn means I must be near enough to it), and in seeing it, in this way or that, it

becomes an “it”, which means I have already taken an orientation towards it.  
(2006: 27)

So although we might understand that objects have some kind of power, through their thing-ness, these objects only obtain meanings through our perception of them and how they might become a part of our assemblage (and in a similar way to how a performance is only a performance under certain conditions and in certain contexts). Ahmed continues, ‘the object is an effect of towardness; it is the thing towards which I am directed and which in being posited as a thing, as being something or another for me, takes me in some directions rather than others’ (Ahmed, 2006: 27). So, an object is a thing which might lead me to act or behave in a certain way, but only insofar as I allow myself to be altered by or through it. That is, the objects function as a potentiality (that might shift the reader-audience's perception), which is more significant for us in our performance writing than the objects functioning as tools to bring about some form of change. Whilst not all performance writing requires the use of objects, objects are fundamental to how we aesthetically approach our practice; offering us a way of contextualising precarity, using the framework of the assemblage as a series of states existing in relation to each other that affect one another's meaning through that relation. Just as the meaning of an assemblage can be altered by being a heterogeneous thing, consisting of multiple states, that exist in relation to one another (and so that relation can change), so does being part of the assemblage have the potential for change, influencing how we interpret, act upon or are acted upon in relation to it.

## ***Arrivants and Politics***

According to Derrida:

What is going to come, *perhaps*, is not only this or that; it is at least the thought of the *perhaps*, the *perhaps* itself. The *arrivant* will arrive *perhaps*, for one must never be sure when it comes to *arrivance*; but the *arrivant* could also be the *perhaps* itself, the unheard-of, totally new experience of the *perhaps*. (1997:29)

Derrida's theory of 'arrivants' is about that which is to come, the possibilities of what might be, through the act of arrival. This is articulated by Derrida in relation to the ghost (that which will never arrive) in *Specters of Marx* (1994). The arrivant is always unfinished. In the same way that an assemblage is a continual becoming, the arrivant considers "what if", and so too is in a continual unfixed state. The concept of the arrivant is focused on the possibilities that come into being in the act of becoming into being. Building on Derrida, Sara Ahmed discusses the encounter with a particular object (and our orientation towards it):

The "bringing forth" of the object involves, for sure its arrival; in coming into being it comes "here", near enough to me, or to you, as it must do if it is to be seen as this or that object. Nothing is not brought forth "without" coming to reside somewhere (say, the house, the room, or the skin) shapes the surface of "what" it "is" that is brought forth. In "having arrived" how does the object become "what", where "what" is open to the "perhaps" of the future? (Ahmed, 2006: 40)

The arrivant denotes the potential of an object or experience. It is a ghost of a potential future, looking to what might be rather than what has been or what might have been. What arrives might be new and unknown, or might be familiar, maintaining the status quo, but the potential is in what might be. It is informed by what has been in its coming into being:

Think of a sticky object; what it picks up on its surface "shows" where it has travelled and what it has come into contact with. You bring your past



encounters with you when you arrive. In this sense an arrival has not simply happened; an arrival points towards a future that might or “perhaps” will happen, given that we don’t always know in advance “what” we will come into contact with when we follow this or that line (Ahmed, 2006: 40).

For example, *House Box* draws on the memory of renting, and of the feeling of being in a particular house (the house itself an assemblage in a state of flux, comprised of different housemates and changing relations), to produce an object that acts as an arrivant, a ‘sticky’ object formed of memory. Whilst this object draws on hauntology to make sense of an anxious future, it also celebrates and finds joy in the potential future that comes through sharing the house: *House Box* is a kind of ‘what if’. Whilst hauntology and the arrivant are not synonymous, they both draw on the unknown future. In applying the concept of the arrivant to something hauntological, then the anxiety of the ghost of the future (haunted by a past future that did not come to pass) is able to be considered as an unfixed potential.

For Ahmed, ‘objects take the shape of this history; objects “have value” and they take shape through labor. They are formed out of labor, but they also “take the form” of that labor’ (2006: 41). Thinking in this way allows us to demonstrate how the phenomenological experience of working in our hospitality jobs is tied up and rooted within the production of the objects in *Desires for Labour*. The objects are a product of the labour we perform when we undertake these roles and they hold multiple forms of value as a result of this. The knitted banner illustrates this quite literally and tangibly, its value physically taking shape through the labour performed in its making, but also the words on the banner that slowly appeared over time were formed through the labour of hospitality, having been formed in response to our jobs during the period of experimentation (the ‘clocking in and out’ task). Our performance

writing always involves objects (not all performance writing does, but this is a characteristic in our work). Whilst the process of construction might share aesthetic qualities with assemblage as a mode of art (for example, the collage-qualities), it is made as an assemblage because it is made through considering the relation between the subject we are thinking about, our autoethnographic experiences with that, the text we write and the object we make, and how the relation of these things inform one another. In making our performance writing we are thinking through the framework of the assemblage.

The “arrivant” has a potential to be political, as there needs to be an encounter between the objects that we have produced and a person in order for these objects to be “activated”. This person could be the reader-audience but it could equally be the encounter between the artists and the object made. Whilst we drew on our own experiences and memories in making this work, we also were thinking beyond the text and ourselves to potential futures. ‘At least two things have to arrive to create an encounter, a “bringing forth” in the sense of an occupation... to “co-incide” suggests how different things happen at the same moment, a happening that brings things nearer to other things, whereby the nearness shapes the shape of each thing’ (Ahmed, 2006: 39). In our performance writing, when we are making the work, the arrivant exists somewhere in between the object and the reader-audience, in relation to the two. The reader-audience is not a real, physical, tangible thing. They are something that as artists we are also orienting ourselves towards; they are a potential future in relation to the object. This offers us meaning as artists; this signalling of potential is, for us in making the work, a form of hope. Whilst a desired outcome is not guaranteed, the opening of potential is positioned as an optimistic

thing. This relationship of orientation creates a relationship of hope that, in resonates with this analysis of Ernst Bloch's theory of hope, '[t]o look to what-may-become-possible rather than what-is-considered-possible is to appreciate the possible that transcends the bounds of accepted possibility, to the possibility that there are possibilities we have not yet actualized' (Goldman, 2022: 80). Whilst our performance writing is not offering a handbook for change, it offers something vital for us in the moment of making, that undermines the certainty of the hauntological, the certainty of 'no more futures'.

### ***Conclusion***

Aesthetically, the assemblage allows space for the invisible, through an appreciation of something being made of parts. This opens potential for new meanings and new ways of understanding being in the world, which we theorise here as an arrivant. Our performance writing is a 'sticky object'; the potential of the arrivant is informed at what has come before but yet is unknown; the arrivant is an unfixed future.

Hannah Arendt defines action as a condition of human life that 'corresponds to the condition of plurality' (Arendt, 1998: 7) whereby 'nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives or will live' (1998: 8). This contrasts with the limits of the self as expressed in work and labour (of what someone is rather than who).

Performance writing then, in offering a way of reimagining the future in relation to the thing it is specifically reframing, has the potential to work with this plurality in order to stimulate action as an outcome. However, anything that performance writing might stimulate, such as imagining change, might be limited to the person(s) making the performance writing. For us, making performance writing (that might stimulate action as an outcome) demonstrates a shift from labour and work to action; through using

our experiences of labour in devising the writing, and using labour and work process in making (through physically making objects). Whilst we analyse this in relation to our own practice, this potential, through art making, might do the same thing for other people making art; the emphasis here is on making rather than receivership. *Desires for Labour* also demonstrates an attempt to shift from experiences of labour and work to action; through seeking out ways through performance writing to think socially, to think in relation to others. Some of this is done literally (such as the 'games' section of the zine), and some of this is done through addressing an unknown audience, through imagining others, and through the idea of potential.

This chapter sees the development of our definition of performance writing to include objects. Whilst not all performance writing will include objects, ours does and we describe this as a millennial practice. The objects connect to millennial precarity both in terms of how they are produced (out of those conditions) and in that the objects *themselves* might be considered precarious. The handmadeness of the objects means we treat them with a degree of care because we are aware of (for example) the hours that went into knitting the banner. Even if the objects exist on a scale of robustness, they feel to us almost delicate, or as something to be cared for, because of the labour that went into them.

We make sense of the world through objects and we made sense of performance writing through making objects. For example, we did not have to knit the banner or make zines or any of the objects we analyse in the rest of this thesis but doing so was central to how we understand millennial precarity. In part they provide something tangible in that they are physical, they are in a sense secure when we feel

we lack security despite feeling delicate as described above. Turning processes of labour and work into something physical makes up for a sense of lack as millennials. Utilising DIY approaches and available materials and skills is part of this too, working within our resources, finding a creative way to use our circumstances and millennial experience.

Despite focusing on aspects of precarity, and this at times being emotional and stressful, both *House Box* and *Desires for Labour* took us beyond the text to imagine potential other realities; and this was 'arrived at' through the work as both an assemblage and an arrivant. Whilst these imaginings are themselves unstable, they signal hope. The understandings developed in this chapter allow us to begin to think about the potential in hauntology for reimagining the future, and the relationship between performance writing and hauntology. The emphasis on precarity lends itself to our texts being hauntological, which we explore in the next chapter.

This chapter brings together scoring and objects through the use of ephemera, to consider how producing these objects relates to ideas around the arrivant and potential. Through analysing performance writing in this way, the chapter further responds to both research questions by utilising our autoethnographic approach in tangent with a practice that seeks to consider how certainty for the future might be undermined. This brings together both the experience of millennial precarity with the concept of hope. The chapter highlights the slipperiness between the three subfields through drawing on performance writing, object-oriented contemporary art and sited score-based performance to demonstrate how the qualities of each work across the fields.

## Chapter Six: Hauntology and Lost Futures

We invite you to engage with *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* practice in conjunction with this chapter.

This chapter returns to the concept of hauntology, first referred to in Chapter One. In Chapter One we describe the hauntological experience of housing as millennials. We find similarities between this and the discussion of employment in Chapter's Four and Five, specifically concerning the casualisation of our academic labour and the relationship between our employment, the cost of renting and saving deposits, the lack of secure employment prohibiting access to mortgages, and our expectations regarding housing. Whereas *House Box* and *Desires for Labour* produced hauntological effects and were analysed retrospectively in relation to this critical framework, *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* was made explicitly to explore the hauntological.

Having found that our experiences of millennial precarity are hauntological, we wanted to explore the potential for performance writing to be a hauntological practice. As such *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* takes hauntology as its central theme as opposed to being analysed as hauntological after making.

### ***Time Out of Time***

Hauntology brings together both ontology (the study of being) and haunting (the not quite dead), in order to consider and question those things that might *have* been or may *never* be. Whalley and Miller note that, 'for Derrida, *Hamlet* is the pre-eminent

hauntological text. We are not asked to mourn Hamlet's death; we are asked to mourn those possibilities that his death removes' (2016: 30). Throughout *Specters of Marx* (2006), Derrida draws extensively on *Hamlet* to articulate a disjointed experience of time, 'the time is out of joint' (2006: 1). He does so to open a space where we may speak with the ghost, to consider the possibilities for what the not-quite-dead might open up.

The present is an impossible concept, somewhere between an ungraspable future and a past. As soon as the present is expressed it is already in the past. Derrida describes the fallacy of the present as follows:

The present is what passes, the present comes to pass, it lingers in this transitory passage, in the coming-and-going, between what goes and what comes, in the middle of what leaves and what arrives, at the articulation between what absents itself and what presents itself...Presence is enjoined, ordered, distributed in the two directions of absence, at the articulation of what is no longer and what is not yet. To join and enjoin. (2006: 29-30)

In particular, he explicates why the (then) European Union is haunted by the (failed) project of communism, drawing upon the statement from *The Communist Manifesto* that 'a specter is haunting Europe - the specter of communism' (Derrida, 1994: 2). As the personification of the ideals and potential of communism, Marx becomes a haunting. In Derrida's writing on hauntology, we get the impression that the future may be hopeful, and that hauntology offers opportunity to consider not just what might have been, but also what the future might still be. And yet, Derrida still comes back to the notion of being haunted by communism, and this mourning for what is lost stops the future from being as hopeful as the reader might like or desire.

We might think of the present then as somewhere between the past and the future, as a point of reflection on both that which came before and that which is yet to come. We draw connections here to Hannah Arendt and her writing on time and what she describes as the three ‘tenses’ of past, present, future. She articulates the ungraspable present thusly:

The present, in ordinary life the most futile of the tenses – when I say “now” and point to it, it is already gone – is no more than the clash of the past, which is no more, with a future, which is approaching and not yet here. Man lives in this in-between, and what he calls the present is a life-long fight against the dead weight of the past, driving him forward with hope, and the fear of a future (whose only certainty is death), driving him backward toward “the quiet of the past” with nostalgia for and remembrance of the only reality he can be sure of (1971: 205)

We may therefore argue that our performance writing as a process of reflection, and as a ‘time-out-of-time’, has the potential to resist the speeding up of time by placing a marker on a specific moment that offers us the opportunity to think, and to think about the reader-audiences who may also use the performance writing to think and to reflect. We offer this at the start of this chapter to help to frame the work that we will be discussing. We also suggest that the ‘stuckness’ that is connected to some experiences of hauntology may be an opportunity to resist.

This chapter considers our practice-research project *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* as hauntological to demonstrate how performance writing strategies can facilitate understandings about millennial precarity, particularly in working through experiences of stuckness. It defines the millennial experience as hauntological and looks outside of our everyday experiences through making work about Chapel Street (and reflects on the regeneration of Chapel Street to do this). The chapter concludes



by summarising how the insights into hauntology are informed by our definition of performance writing as an assemblage.

### ***Chapel Street or Wherever You Are***

In summer 2020, we answered a call out for art works that interacted with Chapel Street in Salford by Proforma, a Manchester-based performance art platform. Chapel Street is one of several streets which join the City of Salford to the City of Manchester. There is a strong history between the two places, and geographically there is no west Manchester. Instead, the city of Salford sits in that position, immediately west of Manchester city centre. Although both cities are distinct from each other, there has been some mingling of identities that people from Salford have resisted to not be swallowed up by the bigger city of Manchester. Chapel Street is long with only a couple of bends, is relatively wide, and has several culturally significant sites along the way. These include a gallery and museum (the site of which was once the first free public library in the UK), an abandoned pub where Marx and Engels are said to have drunk, the Working-Class Movement Library, a shop, the arts buildings of The University of Salford, and a meadow. Our initial proposal was to produce a series of performance scores that offered readers a way of exploring the area, a way of walking in this area, and a way of thinking about these locations. Our proposal was not successful, but we decided to make this work anyway (we are trying to challenge our tendency to 'wait for permission' to make work), because we had begun to wonder about *why* Chapel Street resonated with us. We identified Chapel Street as a particularly hauntological site because of what it represents, through the histories and myths that are associated with the area draw a specific link to the hauntology of Marxism (as described by Derrida above). Both

*House Box* and *Desires for Labour* have come through our experiences and our personal circumstances, and as such have looked inwards as much as they attempt to look outwards at a landscape that produces precarity. Our interest in Chapel Street differs; we visit there, we have a fondness for the area, and we have memories of being there and a vague awareness of the history of the area, but we do not live there, we do not work there, we are not from there, we are not part of the community, and the specifics of what goes on in Chapel Street have no bearing on our daily lives. The hauntology of Chapel Street and the history, present and future of the site mirrors what is happening at other locations across the UK. We came to realise that Chapel Street is indicative of a millennial experience of precarity, once an affordable working-class area and now an unaffordable area, but ironically the regeneration is part of what draws us to the area, due to the art facilities and amenities such as coffee shops that are now available there.

We initially approached this project by walking up and down Chapel Street and stopping at locations that we felt connected to. We would stop at different sites for a variety of reasons, primarily to do with our affective relationship with each location. Some locations we are familiar with because of stories we have been told when walking with the Manchester-based *dérive*<sup>55</sup> group, The Loiterers<sup>56</sup> Resistance Movement<sup>57</sup> for example, where people have shared their memories of locations or

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<sup>55</sup> A *dérive* is a method of walking first developed by Guy Debord and is associated with the Situationists art movement. It is a drifting style of walking, where you do not plan your route or a destination and instead wander based on where you feel drawn to.

<sup>56</sup> Please note, there is no apostrophe in 'loiterers' in this context, as it is the name as used. The group is called 'The Loiterers Resistance Movement' (or LRM for short) without the apostrophe.

<sup>57</sup> The Loiterers Resistance Movement is a group of walkers and urban explorers who go on monthly *dérives* in order to explore the city, using psychogeographical techniques. Psychogeography is connected to the concept of the *derive* and is the study of (normally urban) environments through

have mentioned local narratives about the place. Some of the felt connections are due to memories of times we have been to Chapel Street before, to specific pubs and the university buildings. We utilised some of our anecdotal memories in the artwork we have made. We then drafted performance scores about our chosen sites. We also did some light reading about the history of each chosen site, although we were not concerned with making a history walk out of this project. On future visits, we redrafted the scores and composed an audio tour. The tour is intended to act as a form of mapping of the area. Listeners are able to hear about our interpretation / relationship to the specific location that we are discussing. Part of what drew us to Chapel Street was a myth, in particular the rumour that Marx and Engels drank on Chapel Street. We cannot remember where we first heard this story, but we enjoyed this rumour enough to explore the connection between Chapel Street and communism, especially after having spent time thinking about Marx in relation to this PhD. Ultimately, whether apocryphal or not, Marx and Engels now haunt our interpretation of Chapel Street.

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often personal, relational or emotional connection to areas, and finding new routes or ways of looking at familiar locations. It is quite loosely defined and is open to different methods to explore this, though walking is a common practice. Walking in this sense is interpreted as being subjective: bodies move differently to one another and have different needs and there is no one fixed way of what walking might look like or be experienced as.



**Figure 6.1: showing the box the score cards are presented in. Photo Credit: Ella Bean**

We now invite you to spend some time exploring the content of the box, and to use the contents as prompts for taking yourself out to walk.



**Figure 6.2: showing the contents of the box. Photo Credit: Ella Bean**

*Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* is an assemblage of thirteen business-card sized cards (84mm x 55mm), with thirteen performance scores on them (one score on each card. See Figure 6. 2). They are in the colours associated with the practice we have made for this PhD project, orange and grey. These are in a black box, along with a zine, and the audio element. We have remained consistent in the orange and grey colour scheme as a form of aesthetic continuity throughout this PhD, in some ways this may be connected to a 'house style' that is common with publishing. It also means that the work is recognisable as belonging to a body of practice. Early on in the PhD we made a booklet with a map of Chapel Street and some contextual writing, to accompany a paper we gave at the Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA) annual conference when it was held in Salford in 2017. For this booklet we used grey paper and orange tape. This was prior to developing the assemblage *Desires for Labour*, at which time we decided to stick with this aesthetic theme. Consequently, the colours we have used throughout the PhD are tied up with

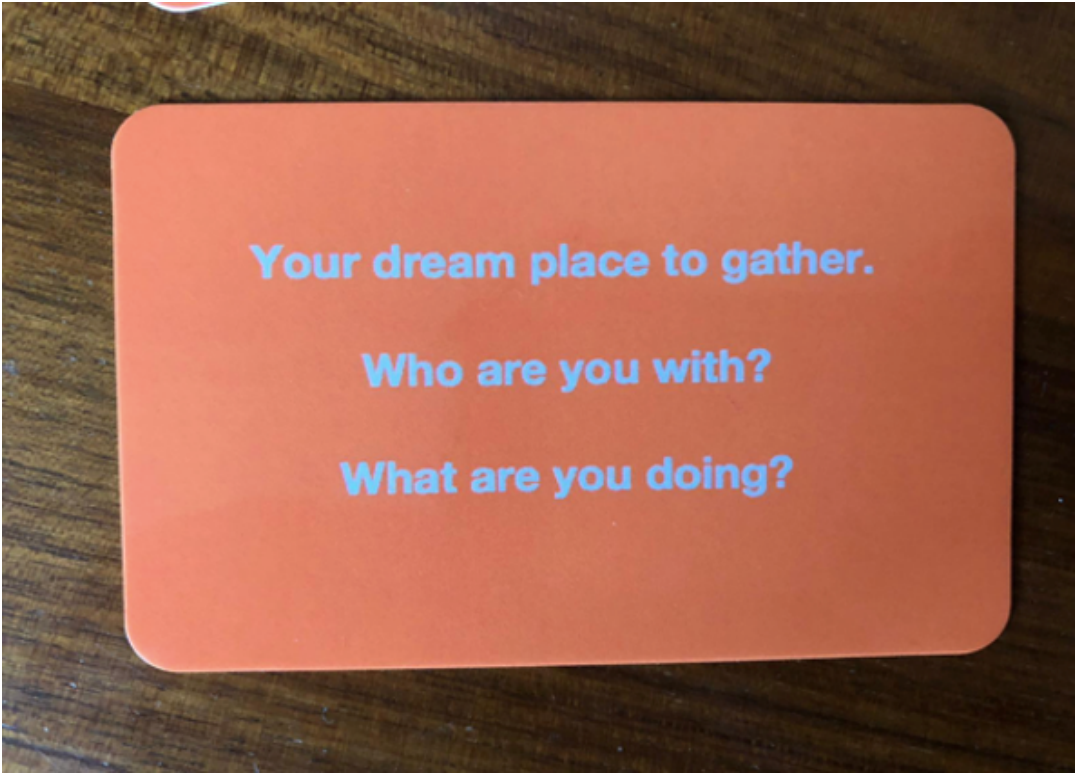
our memories of Chapel Street. The colours then become another form of haunting throughout the research project, where one piece of performance writing is effectively haunted by the previous one and future iterations of the practice and they hold affective meaning through their materiality.

The scores were written with the specific locations in mind, but we have not indicated which score is for which location. The intention is for the reader-audience of the score cards is to make those decisions for themselves. These cards are presented inside a black sturdy cardboard box that looks like a small jewellery box (90mm x 70mm x 30mm - see Figure 6.1). There is also a zine with information about how to use the artwork; this zine includes a QR code that readers can scan to access the audio component (see Figure 6.3). The box is a further example of an assemblage of performance writing, where each element together makes up the performance writing when they are interacted with. These elements share some similarities with *House Box*, specifically that the performance writing is (in) a box, that there is an audio component and that maps are utilised. However the subject and specifics of content of the material differs. In the black box, there is also a map drawn on tracing paper, which identifies each location (in correspondence to the audio tour). This can be placed over other maps (if the reader-audience has a map of where they are), to transpose the route onto other locations if people are using this work at places other than Chapel Street. We intend that such reader-audiences will also choose to stop at places that affect them or in which they feel a connection between location and audio.

We discuss the following locations in the audio component of *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are*, for which we also made the performance scores:

Please spend some time now looking at the orange printed cards.

- An old police station building (now offices)
- A church
- Vauxhall archway (This is what we call it, the real name is 100-114 Chapel Walk, Chapel Street – outside Deva business park)
- A pub – The Kings Arms
- A shop (Shalimar)
- An abandoned pub building, called The Crescent (formerly The Red Dragon)
- The Meadow
- Peel Park
- The old fire station and the houses behind it
- The Working-Class Movement Library
- Salford Museum and Art Gallery
- The New Adelphi Theatre (part of the University of Salford)
- Timekeepers Square (a new build estate we refer to as the Sycamore Sculpture Estate, because of a sculpture in the square)
- A pub – The Old Pint Pot



**Figure 6.3: showing an example of the score cards**



**Figure 6.4: showing an example of the score cards**



The intention of these scores is that they act as writerly texts and open up ways of relating to the site that the reader / walker is in (whether this is Chapel Street or another location in the UK). The cards offer semiotic clues as to how to be read, but the meaning is not narratively driven through these semiotic codes. Instead, it is intended that the meaning comes through the reader's own connection with how they choose to interact with and interpret the cards and in relation to the other components of *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are*. If the cards are encountered away from the context of Chapel Street and the other components of the artwork we have made, the semiotic clues take on different meanings. Some of the scores read initially as more open than others. For example, 'Count the blades of grass in an empty field' suggests a meditation exercise or thinking exercise and is resonant of Marina Abramović's performance method (such as the 'cleaning the house' workshop)<sup>58</sup> that encourages ways of being present. Other writings are more 'suggestive, such as '[w]hat matters so much that you'll make it your last stand?' Such writing utilises a question within their instruction, so as to be more 'leading' in terms of what an audience might think about. This is similar to the Adrian Piper installation *The Probable Trust Registry* (2014) discussed in Chapter Two as we are inviting the reader-audience members to think, and action may follow after but it is not necessarily implied. Other scores are more specific as to a circumstance (e.g., 'Buy a friend a drink' and invite reflection on the connection between one's relationships and the environment they are in. For example, the street may make the reader recall memories of being with particular people. We suggest there that these

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<sup>58</sup> In this workshop, the artist instructs participants to hand in all cell phones, laptops, watches and electronic devices. There is also a requirement not to eat, talk or read. The workshop lasts for five days. (MAI, 2022).

are potential ways the cards may be read; or more accurately, are the ways that we hope they may be used by reader-audiences. They are intended to be writerly in that even if they are interpreted in the ways we suggest, the details and narrative that forms around that interpretation is individual and unfixed. These scores are intended to interrupt the sites they are performed in. Making this work has reframed how we view Chapel Street, changing our associations with the street, rewriting our memories, and allowing us to understand the area in more detail.

The map, as a piece of performance writing that exists in conjunction with the other elements of the assemblage that make up *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* is not complete even when used by others. Through its re-use we as artists become a part of the historical present of the street – even if this is just for ourselves. Firstly, as the mark makers we are entrenched into the object and in turn the street through the act of making. The map also offers directions for others to follow. We are inviting others to follow in our footsteps in the same way that we believe we were following in the footsteps of Marx and Engels. The map is a contribution to the myth of the street, offering another version of the street that we have made ourselves part of through writing. We become ghosts and are folded back into the site through the act of writing and mark making. The map is important as it is one part of the whole, and it is a hauntological object that points to the past and the future of Chapel Street, as a document of the street and our project, and as a way of navigating and reinterpreting the street.

Please now engage with the sound aspect of *Chapel Street* using the QR (Figure 6.5).



**Figure 6.5: QR code used to access audio component of *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are*.**

The work has similarities with Wrights & Sites *Mis-Guides* (as discussed in Chapter Two), and may be likened to a mythogeographical exploration of the street as defined by Phil Smith:

“mythogeography” has developed as a paranoid, exploratory, detective-like approach to space and place, deploying Tim Ingold’s model of hermetic-like excavation of ever-finer layers of geographical texture. It has prioritised anomalies and “in-betweenness”, working in gaps, extolling “voids”, and constructing general ideas from the “and and and” of the accumulation and assemblage of disparate parts. (2011: 268).

Each element of the artwork can be said to be adding a further layer to the geography of the street, in the same way that the work is understood as part of an assemblage. By inserting the performance writing within a street it also becomes a part of an assemblage of and from that street space. We position the audio component as ghostly, suggestive, of being haunted by our experience of Chapel Street but not being defined by this. This ghostliness emphasises the work’s status as performance writing; the author’s interpretation or intention in the moment becomes secondary to any connections the reader-audience makes and as such the text is a space of potential. As artists, returning to the text, we too make new connections. The audio uses writing (through our voices) to produce performance writing that sits between performance and writing. This audio makes explicit that performance writing is not limited to text on the page.

When making this audio element, we were thinking about Janet Cardiff’s *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* (1999) and Playgroup’s *Berlin Love Tour* (2012). The former is an audio work that takes you on a tour around the streets of East London; beginning at the Whitechapel Gallery, the listener follows a narrative that places you inside the drama whilst you are simultaneously a pedestrian in London. To anyone else, you will appear to be like any other pedestrian, listening to something over earphones. As the listener, you walk in time with the narrator. You are in effect in two London’s: the London in the audio and the London you are physically walking

through. Ruth Bretherick understands Cardiff's approach as psychogeographical, 'in that she picks up on the ambience of the places through which she moves, with a particular awareness of how the history of the place colours its character' (2020: 432). Unlike with our work however, there is a sense of a narrative that unfolds that in some (although maybe disparate) ways holds the audio walk together. For the listener, although they may choose to pause, rewind, or ignore the instruction to cross a road, the narrative will still continue. We are inviting reader-audiences to make their own route and narrative.

This sense of being in two places at once is mirrored in *Berlin Love Tour*, in which we participated as part of Fierce Festival in Birmingham in 2012. We were taken on a tour around Birmingham, stopping at various significant sites that the artists had identified in the construction of the narrative. However, the description of each location corresponded to a location in Berlin. As the performance unfolded, it became apparent the tour was not about the sites or the history of either Birmingham or Berlin, but was a love story, being told through the memories of the encounters which the lovers had at each site. Again, the audience is placed in two places at once – Birmingham and Berlin – and in two moments in time: the live moment in Birmingham and the memory of the Berlin-based love affair. This performance ended on a car park rooftop, where the audience was surprised by a band playing the song *Tender* by Blur. (We mention this last detail because this song has become a nostalgic memory that now is a ghostly song in our friendship). The audio component of *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* is not a dramatisation like these other examples. However, we find these useful points of reference, in part because of the mythologisation of the history of Chapel Street, in part because of the way the audio

can be interacted with (at other locations, so the listener is in effect in their own location and Chapel Street simultaneously, as with the audio component of *Housebox*).<sup>59</sup> We wanted to use the hauntological nature of the site – drawing on its past, present, and future – as material to generate the audio element of *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are*. This past then haunts the present in the moment of listening.

### ***Regeneration as Hauntology***

Another type of haunting is also felt in Chapel Street itself. The particular details of Chapel Street are unique and it is a singular street. However, this history now haunts the area as it has become a regeneration project, overseeing the gentrification of the area, and there is a sense that the working-class history (and present) of Chapel Street is being removed. We found that whilst there are specifics of individual locations of Chapel Street, these could also be recognisable of many other locations across the UK as a regeneration project: somewhere in a state of change, somewhere that history is being subsumed by the contemporary neoliberal agenda. We find Jen Harvie's definition of neoliberalism useful here:

neoliberalism is the revived form of liberalism which thrived first in Britain in the seventeenth century and which recognizes and prioritizes the individual's right to seek self-fulfilment and to do so in conditions unrestricted by state-initiated regulations, such as the requirements to pay appropriate taxes, to heed trade restrictions or to observe employment laws pertaining to hiring, firing and paying workers. In neoliberal capitalism, these principles of diminishing state intervention and enhanced individual liberty to seek self reward work in the service of maximising private profit. (2013: 12)

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<sup>59</sup> This is complicated somewhat by recording issues we had. Whereas the audio for *House Box* was recorded in the house it was describing, there was a storm and flooding the week we planned to record the audio for *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are*. Consequently, we recorded these as separate vocal parts in our houses and edited it together. In the current iteration of the audio, you cannot hear Chapel Street in the background.

Chapel Street is home to (for example) the Islington Estate, and we found when reading in the local news about the regeneration of Chapel Street that there was concern that the regeneration was not for the local community on the Islington Estate, but was to bring in new residents, into new build houses and flats that the current residents cannot afford, and to provide amenities to accompany these new residencies, that again the current local residents cannot afford.<sup>60</sup> As part of this process, older businesses that serve the local community are being forced to shut and are knocked down, and there is concern that the social housing and ex-social housing flats could be next. Whether this sense of what might happen does actually come to pass or not, the narrative is familiar – both the aspect of concern for the local community, and projects that oversee the building of new residencies creating uncannily similar building sites across UK cities.

Streets in the process of regeneration are hauntological because of the ghost of the past (and nostalgia for it),<sup>61</sup> the uncanny (the feeling of something being both familiar and unrecognisable at the same time) visual similarities with other regenerated sites of the present (and the sense that the people who may get to enjoy the results of the regenerated site might not have moved into the area yet; they are imagined residents) that means these locations are liminal. To return to Derrida, 'it lingers in this transitory passage' (1994: 29) between the past and an uncertain future. For us, as makers and millennials it is also a site of wishful possibility, of the hope of being

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<sup>60</sup> See Lee (2018) on the effects of living in a community that is undergoing gentrification.

<sup>61</sup> With regards to Chapel Street specifically, we are not commenting on the more recent past (i.e., 1970s to 2000s) of this particular location; we do not know enough about the area to be able to describe it either romantically and nostalgically or as a troubled site that needed socio-economic investment. We did not go to Chapel Street before the regeneration project began.

able to maybe one day afford to live there, but also knowing the desirability of the area comes from the displacement of others. We are unable to know how those people feel about Chapel Street, they may hate living there and be glad to leave but adds to a sense and feeling of guilt about things being the way that they are because we have made them so – these are our personal observations and feelings about millennial housing precarity.

### ***The Hauntology of ‘no more futures’***

‘The slow cancellation of the future’, a phrase coined by the Italian philosopher Franco ‘Biffo’ Berardi in his 2011 book *After the Future*, specifies ‘the sense of ebbing away of a certain conception of cultural time’ (Berardi and Fisher, 2013). As we discussed in Chapter Four, Berardi historicises what we might describe as the modernist picture of the future. Starting with what Berardi identifies as the problematic practises of the Futurists,<sup>62</sup> he tracks how the hope and promises offered through the image of the future slowly became unattainable. In defining the future, Berardi states that ‘the future is not an obvious concept, but a cultural construction and projection’ (2011: 17). The Chapel Street regeneration project offers an example of this within neoliberalism; investment in a projected future that offers financial reward for those investors. How the idea that the future has been cancelled is largely related to capitalism and the whims of the market; Berardi makes clear that he is not referring to the direction of time: ‘I am thinking, rather, of the psychological perception, which emerged in the cultural expectations that were fabricated during the long period of modern civilization reaching a peak in the years after the Second World War’ (Berardi, 2011: 18). Modernism left us with the image of the ‘good life’, the idea that

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<sup>62</sup> Berardi comments that the Futurists were misogynistic and women blaming. (Berardi, 2017).



if we work hard, we can achieve anything that we want, and postmodernism lives in the ghost of the modernist ideal of the future. As Berardi puts it, 'the *utopian imagination* was slowly overturned, and has been replaced by the *dystopian imagination*' (2011: 17, original emphasis).

Mark Fisher's definition of hauntology refers to how the time and feeling of the present are continually influenced by a future that may never come to be. These feelings are both of a past where these futures might have been possible, and a future reality that looks different, was unexpected, and uncertain. Fisher's use of hauntology reflects a less hopeful experience of the future, written almost twenty years after Derrida's defining text: 'the future did not disappear overnight. Berardi's phrase "the slow cancellation of the future" is so apt because it captures the gradual yet relentless way in which the future has been eroded over the last 30 years' (Fisher, 2012: 13). Fisher comments on the way that, although there has been social progression in some areas, culture has become stuck; using examples from music and film he draws parallels between this loss of the new and the political 'stuckness' millennials now find themselves in. He notes that:

What haunts the cul-de-sacs of the twenty-first century is not so much the past as all the lost futures that the twentieth century taught us to anticipate. The futures that have been lost were more than a matter of musical style. More broadly, and more troublingly, the deterioration of a whole mode of social imagination: the capacity to conceive of a world radically different from the one in which we currently live.  
(2012: 16)

We wrote above that one of the ways we observed Chapel Street as hauntological was from walking up and down the street, reflecting on the changes that can be seen happening on the street, and reflecting on our own memories or stories we've been told. But we could also understand this process as a way to try to reimagine an

alternative, through creating a cultural product along and from the street we were attempting to re-imagine the future. This is in part through the way that others may end up engaging with the street because of our exploration and reading of it, although really this is secondary because we do not know who engages with it and we have not solicited this kind of feedback. But in making this work, we bring forth elements of the past, and we come into conversation with what has never been. Making this work caused us to reflect on possible trajectories of the street; and one of those trajectories is the work itself as a mode of engaging with the street in the future.

Our art-making process shares elements with Graeme Miller's 2003 work *Linked*, in which he collected stories, memories, and soundscapes to create a performance of remembrance – from a community that was demolished in order to make space for the M11 motorway. *Linked* existed as an audio tour, in which listeners explore the area of the demolished community through multiple transmitters that pick up different radio frequencies along the way. This created a ghostly feeling; as reflected by Carl Lavery, 'the past haunts the present, doubling it, and ultimately dislocating it from itself' (2005: 154).

In making *House Box* and *Desires for Labour*, we reflected very much on our personal circumstances. We drew on our own house, our own workplaces, and our own feelings about these two precarious experiences. The difference when making work about and on Chapel Street, is that we do not inhabit this site in the same way. Whilst we do draw on our relationship to Chapel Street, a lot of what we conclude about it as a hauntological site, sits *outside* of our own relationship to Chapel Street.

Secondly, this is not a socially engaged practice, and so we want to be mindful that we are not trying to represent an experience that we have not researched or represent people who we have no relationship with; we do not have the authority to do that, and we are mindful we are reflecting on a place that is experienced as home for others. We are tourists in this site. As such, our understandings of Chapel Street as tourists comes from how we recognise the impact of regeneration on Chapel Street, whilst being limited to drawing on our experience as tourists. There are similarities here with Phil Smith's Sardine Street walks:

for 30 months (late 2007 to mid-2010) Simon Persighetti and myself repeatedly walked Queen Street in Exeter, UK. Mostly we walked together, meeting people, observing events both quotidian and extraordinary, and triggering encounters. We explored the street as customers, researchers, trespassers and sometimes as guests; visiting eighteenth century prison cells under the Rougemont Hotel at the invitation of kitchen staff, attending an impromptu Bach concert in the music shop. (2011: 265).

Although we did not produce our work over the same sustained period as Persighetti and Smith, we were able to connect to some of the rhythms and flows of the street, however we did not engage with people in the same way that they did and were only able to offer a brief snapshot of the environment as we understood it. If we were able to spend a longer period exploring the area, this would have changed our connection to it, and might have also led us to being recognised by others who frequently use the street.

For us there was an importance about our status as tourists, as unrecognised, that helped develop our reflections on the hauntological, in the sense that we were able to remain unnoticed and not seen to be 'making art' there. We wanted to create something that could speak to multiple locations. Sarah Gorman, in an article reflecting on her experience of engaging with Janet Cardiff's *Missing Voice*, she

describes how the tourist-gaze, a term coined by the sociologist John Urry that is to do with our desire for pleasure when going away on holiday, ‘... at least a part of that experience is to gaze upon or view a set of different scenes, of landscapes or townscapes which are out of the ordinary. When we “go away” we look at the environment with interest and curiosity’ (Urry, 2002: 1). Being a tourist is usually about taking people away from their everyday experiences but in Cardiff’s work this is distorted:

participating in Cardiff’s walk with such an approach might result in an interesting inversion of the tourist gaze, whereby the participant comes to celebrate everyday practices as valuable within themselves... by asking participants to perform an apparently mundane task (walking the streets, crossing the roads) Cardiff is encouraging them to “perform the everyday” (2003: 88)

Perhaps then, the invitations that we offer our reader-audience members that operate on this ‘everyday’ scale (such as buy a friend a drink) are an invitation to perform the everyday rhythm of the street. In a sense to be a part of the life and fabric of the street as a way of finding new things out about the place, and in order to see things differently. On a counter to this, what being a tourist also revealed to us was how we then become implicated in this regeneration project. Our knowledge of Chapel Street would not exist without being drawn there as tourists because of what regeneration offers us as outsiders. We have been able to benefit from the amenities there, despite being aware that this may impact negatively on others. As observed and reflected on in the audio, we know that small businesses have been forced to close to make space for new buildings, we have witnessed these changes through multiple visits, we know that pubs (including the one where Marx and Engels are said to have drunk) have closed, we can see that business have been boarded up while other ‘chain’ stores have opened. We have attempted to write this into the audio – for

example, reflecting on what businesses we use and why, how the appearance of the street is changing, what we've read about a business being threatened. Making the work allowed us to consider our subjectivity and our position within Chapel Street.

Hauntology, as a characteristic of some performance writing, can be a strategy artists use for imagining alternative futures, and for dealing with the stuckness described in this thesis and by Mark Fisher. Other artists working from other positions might not describe their work as hauntological. We have found that *millennial* performance writing, that is both about and produced through experiences of millennial precarity, whether these be specific autoethnographic experiences (as explored through *House Box* and *Desires for Labour*) or more loosely related to millennial desires (such as to live in a 'desirable' area), works through the feelings precarity produces. One of the ways it has done this is to enable us as artists to imagine types of futures in the moment of making the work. This is achieved in part through the creative activity of producing something to be engaged with in the future, but also is done through reflecting on the pleasures and joys we experience, as well as the difficulties of precarity, and using that as a strategy of imagining how to be with others; how to resist (neoliberalism) and how to navigate through this experience.

### **Conclusion**

The Chapel Street practice has revealed how *Chapel Street* as performance writing is able to both reflect the hauntological and *do* hauntology. Hauntology points to the past, present and future and offers the 'present' as a potential space of appearance. The anticipation of failure might manifest as anxiety. Performance writing offers

strategies for forming new connections within a hauntological experience, and it is inherently writerly. However, this might be complicated by the ways in which performance writing might also memorialise.

The concept of hauntology offers us a framework to understand our own experiences (through *House Box* and *Desires for Labour*), and also the means to make sense of precarity in a wider context (through *Chapel Street or Wherever you Are*). However, our relationship to Chapel Street has problematised our position when making work about precarity. With regards to housing and labour, understanding our relationship to precarity has felt quite straightforward in that these markets do not work for us but we are yet to imagine an alternative model that feels accessible to us. When it comes to pockets of the city that resonate with us culturally, but that are undergoing change that we believe to impact the local community, we have become aware that we might be contributing to other people's precarity by consuming the things put in place as part of the regeneration project. 'The slow cancellation of the future' in relation to regeneration is something we can only attempt to imagine, without knowing what it feels like. We have not really remained as residents in a location long enough to understand the impact of being threatened out of our long-term homes by rising costs (although, we have had to move because of rising rental costs in a location, but we have never anticipated such places as long-term homes). Furthermore, it is likely that even when we are drawn to these gentrified sites, we will remain tourists in them, and not reside in them as we are pricing ourselves out of the market to live there; we are contributing to a rise in prices through consuming the goods available there, and this drives up prices, but we do not have the means to rent (let alone buy) these new properties.

Whilst we might not be able to directly relate to or embody the experiences of those dealing with different types of precarity to ourselves, performance writing has aided us in developing empathy for other types of precarity. At times, our own sense of precarity feels like we have failed, rather than it being a result of existing in an economic system where – despite having been given numerous advantages in life – we still struggle to meet our basic needs and we are still concerned for our long-term security.

Hauntology – through its articulation of the ghost, as we have explored through the *Chapel Street* practice – gave us the means to make sense of those tricky feelings that felt hard to define. This in turn gives us hope. We recognise that we have been attaching ourselves to something unattainable, such as described through the notion of cruel optimism in Chapter Three. Acknowledging this, in tandem with acknowledging that the expected future is lost, opens space to begin to think about what might exist instead (or in Arendt's terms, what might appear). For example, the process of beginning to think of alternative futures is still difficult in an economic climate that privileges modes of economic growth. However, it is a starting point. Hauntology then is for us a means to recognise that which has felt uncertain, and performance writing allows us to articulate and disseminate this as it forces us to think about the conditions in which we are writing it. The *Chapel Street* practice and its concern with hauntology builds on our previous understandings of performance writing. Hauntology connects to the concept of time and duration as discussed in Chapter Four and at the beginning of this chapter. In Chapter Four we wrote about the experience of time making the banner for *Desires for Labour* and how this time

felt different to the time spent at work. The present time of 'now' cannot be expressed, being the past, present and future at once. Hauntology is concerned with the trajectory of the past leading us to an unexpected now and an uncertain and unknown future. Hauntology means feeling unsettled with the now, and the future. In Chapter Four we also wrote about slowing down time as a way of resting the growth and speed that capitalism insists on. In many ways, the methods involved in developing *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* utilised this as a strategy, drawing on walking methods such as a *dérive* to slow our pace, to walk reflectively, and then translate this into performance writing. In other ways, the emphasis on hauntology revealed to us the ways in which we might become stuck in our own work, in reflecting on the past when we are anxious for the future. However, the performance writing has the capacity to hold multiple unfixed meanings (it can be hopeful, slow and also stuck); it is an assemblage of meaning. It can both resist stuckness through seeking collaborative joyful strategies to be in the now (which is, the past present and future), and have this complicated through a sense of memorialising something which has since become unfamiliar.

This chapter shifts slightly away from our quotidian experience into a location we visit but does not form part of our daily experience of precarity. However, it contributes to the development of examining specific cultural, social and economic positions (Question One) in that it looks at precarity in terms of gentrification through hauntology. The chapter also contributes to the second and third aims; in terms of Aim Two ('to define the use value of performance writing within this interrogation') we explore how performance writing strategies can be used to explore something beyond our own experiences and we have applied this to a specific theory (of



hauntology) in order to both explore this in and through practice. The work in this chapter also helps towards the third aim ('to analyse hope and friendship in millennial precarity') in that hauntology is understood as an opportunity and it is through the work in the chapter that we attempt to leave behind feelings of hopelessness and instead start to think about hope, through the ability of performance writing to produce multiple unfixed meanings that might suggest the means to imagine an alternative future.

By analysing the millennial experience as hauntological, we were able to consider the shared hauntological qualities between our autoethnographically produced performance writing, sited score-based work and performance writing objects. Whilst the chapter still uses ourselves as subjects and reflects on our experience of unfixedness as a result of precarity, we reflect here also on the ways in which we contribute to regeneration and the hauntological experience. As such, here performance writing demonstrates its ability for the artist to analyse their own role and subjectivity (not just the experience of) their social, cultural and economic position. This demonstrates a further use value of performance writing.

## **Chapter Seven: The Meal Project: Friendship and the Development of Performance Writing**

This chapter discusses how we have managed the experience of precarity through friendship and the sharing of food as an event demarcated within daily life. Food was a conduit for us to be together in friendship. This first appears as an aspect of our friendship and approach to precarity in Chapter One, where we describe sharing meals as a house share, and describe the image of food piled on the table with many of us sat on the floor around the table, as we lacked enough space or chairs for everyone. We consider this as a moment of joy in our experience of shared rental living.

In order to situate our use of food within a broader framework of practice, this chapter provides a brief literature review of several artistic projects that use food, and survey how our project differs in intention and execution. We describe what we came to term as *The Meal Project*: a series of meals shared throughout 2020. This process leads to the performance writing work called *Recipe Book*, excerpts of which form Chapter Eight, and which is analysed in Chapter Nine.

This chapter describes the process of *The Meal Project*. We connect hospitality and friendship to make connections between sharing (or offering up) space and rehearsing our political selves, and through this we begin to address the third aim of this thesis 'to analyse hope and friendship in millennial precarity'. This chapter describes the process of *The Meal Project* as a generative process for performance writing, building on the emphasis of process as established in Chapters Two, Four

and Five. This project lends itself to an analysis of process in part because of the duration of the project (a year), making this the longest period of experimentation for any of the themes discussed in the thesis. The project also allowed particular focus on how the method of experimentation informs the writing produced as a reflective process (also discussed in Chapter Nine in reference to writing *Recipe Book*).

The political potential and potency of diverse and plural meanings led us as artist-researchers to explore food (making, sharing, consuming) as a mode of thinking about friendship in addition to and in conjunction with our performance writing. We personally have special shared memories of eating together, and these memories act as way markers in our friendship. We are interested in how we might take this personal association and translate this through performance writing in a way that enables the reader to connect with their embodied emotional memory of food and friendship. We spent a year generating material that might become a written outcome, with the intention that the performance writing would connect memory and imagination. This is in order to consider the imaginative possibilities of memory that might aid us in reimagining our (currently imagined) trajectory to the future. For our year-long (2020) practice-research *The Meal Project*, we set an intention to share food we had made together twice a month, as a means of making time for our friendship and as a process of producing performance writing. *The Meal Project* was a devising process that ultimately led to *Recipe Book*, discussed in Chapter Nine.

*The Meal Project* is the 'performance' within performance writing; whereby we took a quotidian act – preparing, eating, and sharing food – and demarcated this from daily life, framing this as both performance and as something we are methodologically

paying attention to. On one level, us choosing to eat together like this is no different than any other aspect of us spending time together as friends. However, we define this as practice-research because the meals were framed through specific questions (below), and then documented (through note-keeping and photography), paying attention to how the meals responded to these questions. These meals therefore were something other than 'just' us spending time together. The irony is, as so much of our friendship has become about working together during this PhD, so too did the joy of sharing food become a way of working. We referred to the meals as an experiment throughout 2020, but in reality, the process was not an experiment so much as a means of refining our focus within something we already do. We intended to set aside time to do a tangible activity together (an activity related to both hospitality and our experience of friendship) so that we might bring attention to how we work together, positioning food and meal preparation as a metaphor for our collaborative research strategy. This includes how we make decisions, how we share tasks, how we look after one another and how we find ways to enjoy time together. For us, the preparation and sharing of food encompasses all these processes.

As such, we considered these meals as a way to interrogate the relationship between being friends and colleagues, and as a means of using pleasure and fun as a strategy of care (both for the self and for each other). We intentionally did not produce performance writing during this time, waiting until we had conducted a year's worth of meals, and then generating performance writing out of that experience. This was another reason for note-keeping; we wanted to have material we could utilise for the performance writing if we wanted, as well as drawing on the memory of the meals. We were guided by two loose questions.

- 1) How important is the act of cooking together as opposed to, or in relation to, the sharing of the food that is prepared?
- 2) How might food connect us to people who cannot be present?

The second question is connected to hauntology, as a way of thinking about those we are separated from due to conditions of precarity (such as: being unable to make time to be together or finding ways to cook for one another when a friend is unable to cook together, or thinking of those who are far away who we would like to be with).

This question proved timely in other unintended ways, as three months into the project, in March 2020, the UK entered a national lockdown due to the Covid 19 pandemic, and much of the project was conducted during conditions of mandated social distancing.

### ***The Potential of Food***

We are placing here *The Meal Project* in a lineage with other 'foodly' contemporary art practices. The projects we looked at all shared common ideas around collectivity, care, or community to varying degrees, but it is apparent food offers strategies of *being with* or *thinking with* others in art. For us, food was less about explicit networks of care or community and more as a tool to embody friendship, which we hoped to translate into performance writing.

There is a rich history of food being used within contemporary art practices as a way to bring people together. In 2012, the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago presented an exhibition titled *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art*. In this section we will discuss several examples of the work on show there

including Suzanne Lacy and InCUBATE; these practices both use food in order to solve a problem (or rather problems), and beyond this they draw on friendships and human relations in order to do so.

The artist Suzanne Lacy has a background in community organising (before becoming an artist), with connections to and involvement with the feminist movements of the 1970s. Lacy's practice uses art in challenging dominant political ideologies. For example, in her large-scale project, *The Oakland Project* (1991-2001), Lacy worked with a group of teenagers in Oakland to challenge the way that they are represented in the media. Her work often uses food, as both tool and medium. This is evident in her collaborative work *River Meetings: Lives of Women in the Delta* (1981-82), created to mobilise support for the Equal Rights Amendment, which was drafted to protect women from discrimination. When the College Art Association held their annual conference in New Orleans (at a time where some states would not adopt the amendment), *River Meetings* was produced as a protest action against the Association and consisted of 'a series of smaller meal-based performances that were intended for reproduction and media consumption. She and collaborator, Laverne Dunn, cooked camp-style meals in tourist sites, staging photographs to call attention to the boycott agenda' (Smith, 2012: 76). For *The International Dinner Party* (I.D.P, 1979), Lacy organised a large-scale version of a dinner party that was made up of multiple parties that took place across the world on the same date, where women were invited to hold their own dinner parties and make connections with locals in their area. Lacy, whose mentor was the artist Judy

Chicago<sup>63</sup>, created the work as a gift to Chicago whose installation was staged at the same time titled *The Dinner Party*. Lacy invited those who held dinner parties to send details of their parties via telegram. These telegrams were then used during Chicago's exhibition for Lacy to create a map of the geographical locations where the women had engaged with the project. This documentation, along with the large-scale map, were all displayed as part of *Feast* (Smith, 2012).

The approach that Lacy took for her *International Dinner Party* influenced how we think about meals as performance events. Her project was activated or encountered through performance writing, in particular the telegrams that are sent and received. Unlike other modes of performance meals, those who engaged in Lacy's project might not have had any connection to the food (the food may not be eaten by them, prepared by them, seen by them, photographed for or by them, purchased for them, grown by them etc). The meal, not witnessed by the gallery audience, is instead interpreted through the performance writing and through imagining the meal. The writing here does more than documenting the performance, it is a mode of the performance whereby the action of the meal is translated through this writing and thus encountering the performance writing becomes part of the performance event. It suggests ways how we might use food in performance writing specifically in terms of what the writing might lead to or become.

InCUBATE, which stands for 'Institute for Community Understanding Between Art and The Everyday', was a research institute and artist's residency program that

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<sup>63</sup> Judy Chicago (born 1939) is an American artist, known for her contributions to feminism and large-scale collaborative works. In addition to *The Dinner Party* (1974-1979) her works include *The Birth Project* (1980-1985) and *The Holocaust Project* (1985-1993) (National Museum of Women In The Arts Artists, ND).

sought out new modes of alternative infrastructures for arts management. A group of three friends and graduates (Roman Petruniak, Abigail Satinsky, and Ben Schaafsma) from the arts administration course at the School of Art Institute of Chicago set up InCUBATE in 2007 in order to 'experiment with flexible, sustainable, and ethical approaches to arts administration and funding' (Smith, 2012: 200). This involved experimenting with a range of tactics and possibilities for alternative means of arts funding and led them to ask questions around what type of arts managers they wanted to be. Thinking through radical possibilities of economies led them to develop the *Sunday Soup* (2007-2011) which was a small grant to fund artistic projects. Abigail Satinsky (a member of the group) explains the concept thus:

Patrons of *Sunday Soup* paid \$10 for brunch and a presentation by a local artist or organiser (who most of the time also cooked the soup) and got one vote on which proposal received the proceeds from the meal. Our space's physical size controlled the size of the grant. We could seat around thirty-five to forty people, which therefore limited the grant to about \$200 after costs. Our goal was to demystify the process of arts funding by making it direct, transparent, and democratic. (2010: 205)

The group proposes a practical means to fund small scale art projects, offering immediacy between artist and funder and transparency through the funding process. It means that those who participate get a clear understanding of what their participation within a project leads to. There is a direct mutual correlation between participation, funding, and outcome. This is also a model for how food can be used to generate income. The meal here is not the thing itself but is the thing that leads to something else. The group's model speaks to the millennial experience of precarity, where a cut to resources and access to funding opportunities continue to dominate our experience of creative practice. Whilst this funding does not address the sociological issue of precarity, it does support the demographic of millennials living in



precarious conditions who seek artistic opportunities by offering alternative funding streams.

Satinsky (2012: 204) also notes the importance of friendship for *Sunday Soup*. In the early days of the project a small group of people would attend the meals, a group of friends who were able to invest their friendship into community projects. This model is significant because of the open democratic DIY approach and the way it highlights the plurality of friendship: rather than approaching a group of friends as a closed network, this group organises in such a way that others are invited into their community. It does not impose itself on a community but by inviting others in it offers a process of mutual and beneficial exchange. The \$10<sup>64</sup> buys more than the soup. We can presume that anyone going is interested in supporting the arts as opposed to purchasing soup, and instead the soup is a symbol for this exchange.<sup>65</sup>

In a 1999 edition of *Performance Research, On Cooking*, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblet's essay 'Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium' offered a history and critique of key performances that use food as a central part of their construction. Kirshenblatt-Gimblet begins with a personal memory of attending the 1994 *Points of Contact: Performance, Food and Cookery* conference in Cardiff. Kirshenblatt-Gimblet states the conference was a food event in its own right; alongside experiencing performances by Richard Schechner and Bobby Baker, delegates 'feasted at Happy Gathering, a nearby Chinese restaurant, sampled

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<sup>64</sup> As a model for funding, *Sunday Soup* still runs the risk of exclusivity. For example, how does it ensure that there is a broad range of voices heard, and what if your friends did not have \$10 to spend on a bowl of soup?

<sup>65</sup> The soup also potentially offers further symbolic meanings, such as a 'soup kitchen'; a place where people who cannot afford to eat can get a hot meal, mirrored to some degree in the idea of accessing alternative funding when mainstream funding is not possible.

Welsh cheeses, and alternated roasted meats and rounds of polyphony at a Georgian banquet in a local church' and the delegates also harvested their own lunches from 'the edible greenhouse, entitled *A Temperate Menu*, created by Alicia Rios' (1999: 1). She then explains the ways that food and eating is already like performing and participating in performance, highlighting that, '*to perform is to do...* Second, *to perform is to behave*. This is what Erving Goffman calls the performance in everyday life' and finally, '*to perform is to show*' (1999: 1-2); echoed in the ritualistic and communal aspects of eating. The most interesting possibilities for food and performance coalesce in dissociation: '[w]hile we eat food to satisfy hunger and nourish our bodies, some of the most radical effects occur precisely when food is dissociated from eating and eating from nourishment. Such dissociations produce eating disorders, religious experiences, culinary feasts... and art' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblet, 1999: 3). Our decision to use food as a tool in our friendship mirrors this dissociation. For us, food was less about nourishment and necessity, but was instead about celebration, luxury and significantly, as a means of making time. For us, food is a means of slow pleasure, craft and resistance, the concept of 'slow pleasure' is outlined in Chapter Four.

More recently, Joshua Abrams has written about the performativity of new dining experiences, drawing on a range of restaurants (2020). He starts by offering details of his experience of eating at Restaurant Noma in Copenhagen, where everything on the table (except the plates) is edible and the diner is permitted to explore the range of things that are laid out before them. Noma offers an experience akin to foraging, designed to make the diner consider the issues around the climate crisis; this is done through bringing together elements of craft to create an art work through the dining

experience, where 'craft artistry and notions of scenographic presentation [...] encourage the diner to pause, to think, to engage across the senses, through recontextualising food, enabling the diner to see it anew through deploying novelty' (2020: 492). Again, here the use of food becomes a catalyst for something else: to thinking about the connections between humans and the climate crisis. Through performance, diners are placed at the centre of the issue, asked to think about what they are consuming. More than this, what Abrams evokes through his analogy of the plate of performance space, parallels the 'page as performance space' as a key attribute of performance writing (Allsopp, 2004: 3). However, instead of the words being the performers, in Abrams' example instead it is the ingredients of the meal which are selected, prepared and put together to curate the performance (meal).

Other recent projects concerning food and art have continued to focus on the politics of food. Delfina Foundation's Politics of Food is a regular season of work that explores the role of food within art:

Artists have long employed food within their processes and practices, with renaissance artists Giusseppe Arcimboldo and Caravaggio using food to subtly highlight complex societal issues. In the twentieth and twenty-first century, a host of cultural practitioners have continued in this vein, interrogating relationships between food and environmental, social and economic concerns, as well as notions of cooking and eating as performative acts, recipes, and cookbooks as oft-contested markers of cultural memories. (Delfina Foundation, no date)

Many writers and critics have begun to challenge the appropriation of food cultures in mainstream restaurants – for example, through the way that restaurant chains such as Bundobust and Dishoom purport to offer 'authentic' (i.e., a colonial version of) Indian street food that is supposed to mimic that which you might get in India, but at a much higher cost, and it might still be altered for to fit a western idea of what Indian

food is like (see The White Pube's text 'I hate Dishoom' [Muhammad, 2020]).

Custom Food Lab is a group of artists, designers, researchers, growers, and activists who are interested in the ecosystems of food production and consumption.<sup>66</sup> On their website they note, '[w]e make food. We make work about food. We grow food. We write about food' (Custom Food Lab, no date).

The brief literature review above features examples of performance in which the food *does* something, as opposed to food (solely) being semiotically used as a theatrical metaphor (for example using tomatoes in performance to represent blood). These examples do not exhaust the multiple meanings that can be derived from food in performance and art, but they share a commonality in offering modes of resistance, offering aesthetically alternative ways of self-organising and community organising, ways of using the imagination in food-based performance, and offers ways of establishing meanings with food that are disassociated from the basic bodily needs that food provides.

There are further political dimensions to food and connections between consumption and precarity. In *Cruel Optimism* (2011), Lauren Berlant notes the ways that consumption of fast food has led to an obesity crisis in the USA, highlighting inherent inequalities within this.

Those who are poorer are less likely to have access to healthcare, less likely to have the means to exercise, and more likely to struggle to find meaningful work that can

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<sup>66</sup> Custom Food Lab run artistic and research projects, with an emphasis on sustainable practice. This includes developing growing practices and collective foraging and making food.

support them into better health. Berlant notes, '[t]he bodies of the U.S. waged workers will be more fatigued, in more pain, less capable of ordinary breathing and working, and die earlier than the average for higher-income workers, who are also getting fatter, but at a slower rate'. Berlant continues '... they will live the decay of their organs and bodies more explicitly, painfully, and overwhelmingly than ever before; and it has become statistically clear that between stress and comorbidity they will die at ages younger than their grandparents and parents' (2011: 114).

Berlant also highlights the pleasure derived from food as one of the only regular examples that we can control. Although Berlant refers to a U.S. context, these issues translate to the U.K. where, although we have state healthcare, access to the means to look after one's health in everyday life is still predicated on types of precarity and privilege. This resonates with our research project in relation to precarity (for example, self-soothing using 'unhealthy' food, or how being given a twenty-minute break to eat in during a ten-hour shift limits what food you can consume or being too tired to meal prep after a twelve-hour day). Part of the reason why we wanted to do *The Meal Project* was to seek out and recall the joy in cooking and eating; this means carving out time for this and for each other. As such this practice seeks ways to extend our private selves into the public sphere and emphasise the importance of human interaction.

Nicholas Bourriaud defines relational aesthetics as 'an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space' (2002: 14). Much of the focus of relational aesthetics was in practices that exist within a gallery, that depend

upon a random configuration of audiences, to create some kind of ‘community’.

Bourriaud’s theory was developed to analyse art practices in the 1990s and sought to re-think the canon of art history to allow these works to be understood within a context and framework of their own. This shift is historically significant to the subject matter of this thesis, particularly in relation to labour practises and precarity. As Claire Bishop notes, Bourriaud ‘considers it to be a means of locating contemporary practice within the culture at large: relational art is seen as a direct response to the shift from a goods – to a service – based economy’ (2010: 258). This is perhaps most apparent in practices that use food as a tool, where the food is doing something beyond simply sustaining our bodies and relates to the emotional labour and customer service aspects of hospitality as a business model. However, Claire Bishop’s critique of Rirkrit Tiravanija’s meal-based art installations tells us that those people who attended the gallery spaces were already connected to the art world (Bishop, 2010: 265). The meals did function as sites of encounter, but not necessarily in the way that the artist had hoped – instead it offered a place for curators, artists, and writers to connect to each other.

In making our own work about food we are mindful not to replicate a false sense of community building. As Bishop notes, ‘[t]here is debate and dialogue in a Tiravanija cooking piece, to be sure, but there is no inherent friction since the situation is what Bourriaud calls “microtopian”: it produces a community whose members identify with each other, because they have something in common’ (Bishop, 2010: 265). Whilst the same might be said of *Sunday Soup* (that is, all participants have a shared interest in the arts in common), the focus of what the project is trying to do (democratise funding) isn’t undermined by how it operates. In other words, *Sunday*

*Soup* isn't claiming to bring new configurations of people together. It uses community but does not make claims as to how it does this, instead focusing on how this community might rethink arts funding. Bishop's critique of relational aesthetics suggests there is a falsity in the claims that the movement makes about itself; that the lack of friction in a microtopia is inherently self limiting. It cannot bring about change. In contrast, friendship and hospitality offer modes of thinking, imagining, caring and being political but are not utopian concepts because friendship is complex, sticky, open, plural, difficult: friendship contains frictions.

### ***Hannah Arendt and Friendship***

Although Hannah Arendt did not write specifically about her philosophy of friendship, the role friendship played in her life combined with her writing on the public and private realms reveals the political potential of friendship for Arendt. Jon Nixon writes about this in his 2015 book *Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Friendship*, where he states that the reason Arendt did not write about the concept of friendship, is because friendship is a practice, an action: 'Friendship was something she *did*' (2015: 160). He describes Arendt's friendships as fiercely loyal, long term, and marked by a sense of duty:

Duty and freedom are at opposite ends of this political spectrum. But, for Arendt, duty towards one's friends was a necessary means of ensuring the possibility of freedom. Her friendships had, after all, sustained her and provided her with a modicum of security in what had been a chronically insecure world (...) Duty on this alternative political spectrum is not the antithesis of freedom, but one of the conditions necessary for its realisation: duty is what we owe one another - what is done to us - by virtue of laying claim to a common world. (2015: 161)

Duty – received and given – to one's friends therefore provides some insulation in the face of precarity; and obviously, as a holocaust survivor who sought asylum

internationally, Arendt's experiences are very different to the experience we describe in this thesis, and we are not claiming to understand her experience. Furthermore Arendt's books were published post World War Two, and we are instead writing from the context of an UK based early twenty-first century socio-economic experience. The context in which security is provided in the above quote has more immediate consequences (i.e., more immediate survival needs) than the context in which we are writing from: of being unable to plan for the future but having our immediate survival needs being met (with the anxiety that this will not continue to be the case). However, this description of friendship resonates with us in terms of how friendship might offer a means to practise care for one another, as protection against precarity.

For Arendt, duty overcomes certain differences; for instance, your loyalty to friends usurps how they might feel about each other (two friends can dislike each other, but you can be friends with both), and political difference. Arendt understood friendship as worldly and as a dialogue between self, other and world (Nixon, 2015: 163). It is 'a metaphor for a world within which the thinking self-communicates with both itself and others'; a 'world within a world' (2015: 173). Rather than being a closed world, friendship offers plurality, a space to practise politics that points outwards. Friendship spans both the public and the private; it gives space to be cared for and in which to think (the private), and it goes out into the world to be enacted (mutual support and collaboration offers political potential, looking outwards to your community).

Nixon describes the rise of the neoliberal that gives way to conditions of precarity, and how this has impacted on friendship:

What we do know is that representative democracy now faces a widely acknowledged problem of non-participation and disengagement: the



public realm has been subject to systemic privatisation; the private sphere has become increasingly vulnerable to the encroachment of consumerist culture and mass society; and friendship has become exposed to social influences and pressures that mitigate against continuity and sustained dialogue. The idea of politics as collective action - and of power as the collective potential that exists between people - has very little impact on the way in which many democratic governments now operate. (2015: 179)

Friendship can offer a bridge between public and private, and thus find ways to enact being political in public, through friendship as a way to 'rehearse' this in private.

Making time to do this though when living under circumstances of atomisation is difficult. *The Meal Project* employs friendship as a way to rehearse being political in private, which can then extend to the public self. It does this in several ways; through practising a micro version of collective action through decision making (what to eat, and when to eat, and how to prepare this), through making space for one another, through seeking out commonality and community through food (an attempt also to mitigate and lessen the impact of consumerist models we are entrenched in through the sharing of food, even though generally we did not produce ingredients ourselves but bought them from shops where we do not know the supply chain) and through the plurality of being together, as Arendt states that, 'no human life, not even the life of the hermit in nature's wilderness, is possible without a world which directly or indirectly testifies to the presences of other human beings' (1998: 22). Whilst this process has little impact on systemic change, it does offer us a means to realise the ways we are already political, or might bring more attention to politics in our daily lives. It reduces the sense of atomisation and hopelessness of having little impact through bringing attention to the ways in which we are engaged, and are participating in political life, through being. The hope is this extends at some point beyond the private.

### ***The Meal Project: Notes***

The parameters for the meals that comprised *The Meal Project* were quite open as to how many people and who would be attending these meals (for instance, we intended that we would always be there, but we wanted to be flexible about who we might invite). We also wanted to be flexible about what we cooked (see Figure 7.1 for an example of one meal, mushrooms on toast, pictured here as it is one of our favourite meals to share together). We were clear that we did not need to be specific or restrictive in terms of what meals we were making (i.e., it could involve making breakfasts, lunch, supper, or snacks). The reason for this was to not dictate too much in advance what could happen during the project, but instead adapt and respond to situations as they arose.



**Figure 7.1: Mushrooms on Toast, from Meal Project (our favourite meal to share together)**

In contrast to the examples discussed at the beginning of this chapter, *The Meal Project* was not public, instead offering a private space for us to be in dialogue. In order to document this process, and gather materials that would ultimately become *Recipe Book*, we recorded specific things after each meal: a list of ingredients used to make the meal, the instructions for making the meal, a paragraph about the experience of the meal (personal notes like who was there, where we were, what we talked about, what we thought about etc.) and a photograph of the prepared meal. The process consisted of: deciding when we were having a meal; making and eating the meal, then making notes individually after reflecting on the meal. Although we had set out these guidelines, each of us kept very different notes. Katheryn (see Figure 7.3), for example, noted with detail the ingredients and instructions for each meal as well as a diary documenting each individual meal, whereas Chris's notes (see Figure 7.2) focused more upon the personal experiences and reflections on the project. This is indicative of our personalities and demonstrates how component parts of a collaboration come together or are worked through to create 'one' voice.

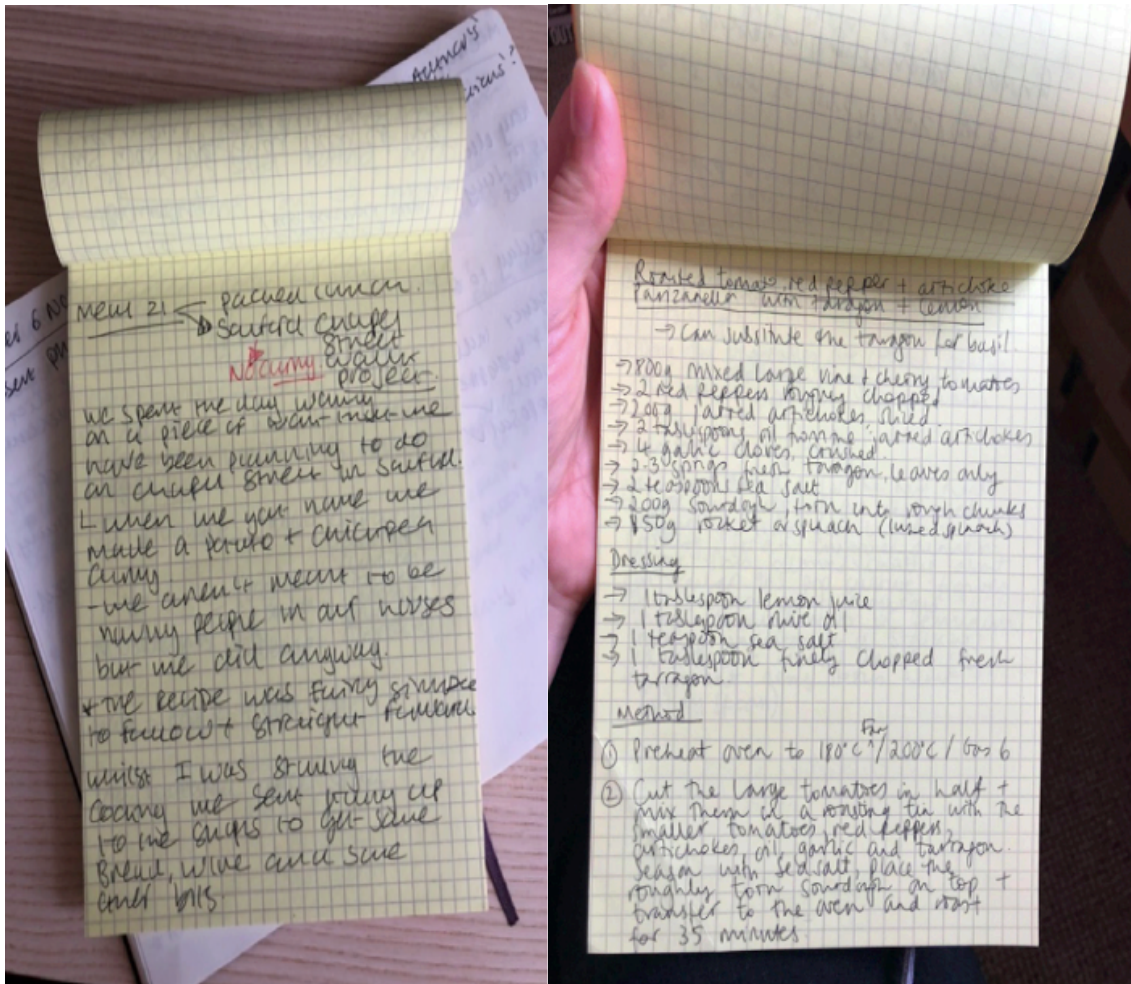


Figure 7.2: example of Chris’s note keeping and Figure 7.3: example of Katheryn’s note keeping.

Whilst we had not decided from the beginning how and what we would use from the notes, we knew that this method would be central to whatever performance writing we produced. In his final lecture series at the College de France (1978-9 and 1979-80), Barthes embarked on an experiment that lasted two years and which eventually became the text *The Preparation of the Novel* (2011). This was a pedagogical experiment that explored the step-by-step process of writing a novel. This novel was never written, and in many ways it does not matter, because the experiment still produced the concept of the novel through imagining the novel. There are similarities here to our methodology of collecting notes and trying to put something together from fragments. Barthes describes a ‘daily practice of notation’ (2011: 90),

something we have done during different moments of this PhD as a part of generating material for each of the pieces of practice: for *House Box*, we set aside moments of experimentation where we noted certain things specific to the environment (for example, staying in one room for twenty-four hours, noting things like the weather outside and how we were feeling trapped). For *Desires for Labour*, we made notes about our shift patterns, what we ate, when we took breaks, and when we re-claimed time. Barthes' notes would then make up the content of his novel, for which he likens to preparing ingredients before making a meal (Barthes, 2011: 90-91). This method of note-keeping is now a familiar process in the generation of our performance writing where both the performance (the eating) and the writing (the putting together of the recipe) come together.

The notes we made during *The Meal Project* themselves tell a story. Normally when we eat together we are able to focus on making and consuming the food, but as these meals were also a research project, the notes are a methodological record of eating together *and* of the impact documenting and analysing eating together has on the meals themselves. This felt at times like a disruption, or an effort that took us away from being present. To counteract this, we would usually make our notes after the event, and so the quality and quantity of the notes vary based on how soon we wrote them after the meal. Furthermore, the nature of the notes we kept became very different to what we had anticipated, as for much of 2020 we were in a national lockdown, and so could not physically eat together. As a result, we often documented the experiences of eating with someone who we physically weren't sharing a space with (as we lived in separate houses throughout 2020).

We devised specific headings and formatted our year of notes to fit under them. However, when we came to edit these together, we noticed that each of us had again interpreted the instructions in slightly different ways. Chris wrote his notes in date order, with the recipe almost secondary to the occasion, whereas Katheryn did the opposite and wrote her notes recipe by recipe, with notes added at the end. What this highlights is the way that interpretation and understanding is different for each of us. This difference in approach lends itself to the format of a recipe book, as a place of interpretation that makes room for different approaches, and as writerly texts. (We further discuss this in Chapter Nine). Ultimately, we tried to make a book that had moments of presenting as one authorial collaborative voice with moments that allow for our two individual voices as required, as we have done throughout this PhD. We also intended for the text to suggest multiplicity, in terms of how it is written (incorporating multiples through the use of memories re-authoring experience), and for in how it might be encountered (by multiple readers).

### ***The Meal Performances***

It was our intention that the meals would happen together, that they would be an opportunity to set aside a specific time each fortnight to share food together, to think about how through the medium of shared meals our friendship(s) might grow and develop, and how this becomes dedicated time to spend together in friendship. These meals, now demarcated from everyday life as an event or action, are framed as performances rather than regular meals shared between us.

The meal performances exist in multiple formats. This includes larger parties and smaller meals where only the two of us were present. The first of these meals, Meal



One, was a pizza party for Katheryn's birthday. There were multiple people present for food and the meal extended into a party afterwards. We did not ask the people present for feedback or for responses, instead we documented this from our perspective only. If we were to repeat this, we might consider how to involve the people present within the methodology. At the time, our approach was directed more to the collaborative aspect between ourselves (Katheryn and Chris), which we felt appropriate as we were concerned with using this process as a collaborative writing strategy for our performance writing practice. Another example of a meal was Chris's birthday that was a smaller affair. There were only three of us present for this meal, and it felt special as this was one of the first times we were able to be together in a long time.<sup>67</sup> Further to this, we also had a number of meals where we experimented with other collaborative forms, inviting others to share food between themselves and reflect on the meal. This was an attempt to engage with others during our isolation due to lockdown. Finally, we shared a number of meals (in person and using the video call method described below) that were just between us, for example the meal where we made mushrooms on toast. These different versions of sharing food allowed us to generate specific material for performance writing: the group meals allowed us to think about how we create space for other people and how we invite others to join us (through food); the lockdown meals (described below) allowed us to focus on the preparation and creating of the meals; and the meal performances we shared just between the two of us allowed us to focus specifically on our friendship as makers. The things we made were decided on in advance.

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<sup>67</sup> This meal took place in August 2020, following the initial lockdown of 2020 due to Covid-19. We were still cautious to socialise and there were restrictions about entering one another's homes but we were able to eat outside.

We continued the project during the lockdowns. As we could not physically eat together, we initially dealt with this distance by preparing the same meal as one another, usually cooking ‘together’ over a video call, then sitting down to eat. We would stay connected until we had both prepared the meal and we would then eat those meals separately. We found on these occasions, attempting to eat together on video call felt uncomfortable, and took away from the pleasure of the food and of sharing the experience, whereas cooking together in this way had felt communal and connecting.

### ***Sharing / Gifts***

The recipes we used are a combination of ones we have sourced (from the internet or books) and recipes we have devised ourselves. There are also two recipes that were donated by friends and family. The composition of these two recipes as presented in the recipe book do not follow the same format as the rest, but instead are presented in the way we received them (one we were sent via text, one as an illustration). The initial lockdown of 2020 gave rise to us thinking of ways food might be shared when we cannot eat together. We asked friends and family if they would like to share a meal with the people they were within the lockdown, and to document this and send the recipe to us. This was a way for us to experience the meals of our loved ones without being physically part of the meal, and without attempting to replicate the feeling of being present (as we had been doing by using video calls to cook together). We experienced these meals as the reader-audience ourselves; this food was ‘shared’ with us, but our consumption of this wasn’t through eating but rather through reading about the meal. Katheryn’s parents and Katheryn’s friend, Ella, joined in and donated the following (see Figures 7.4 and 7.5):



# Vegan Sweet Potato and Spinach Carrelloni:

## Ingredients:



- 1 LARGE SWEET POTATO (OR TWO SMALL)
- A BIG HANDFUL OF SPINACH
- 2/3 CRESHNT MUSHROOMS
- 4 CHERRY TOMATOES
- 1/2 WHITE ONION
- 2 CLOVES OF GARLIC
- 1/2 TIN OF TOMATOES
- VEGAN GARLIC AND HERB CREAM CHEESE
- LASAGNA SHEETS

- VEG STOCK
- SALT AND PEPPER
- ITALIAN SPICES (OR - OREGANO, THYME, BASIL AND ROSEMARY)
- GARLIC GRANUALS
- PAPRIKA
- CUMIN
- CHILLI POWDER
- VEGAN CHEESE

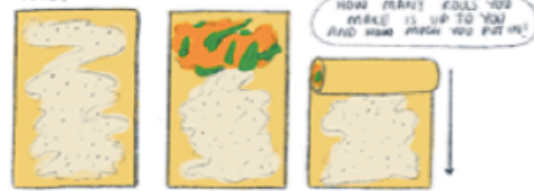
- PREHEAT OVEN TO 180°C (FAN OVEN)
- STEAM POTATO WITH FORK AND PLACE ON BAKING TRAY IN OVEN.
- DICE MUSHROOMS, TOMATOES, GARLIC AND ONION. SOFTEN ONIONS THEN ADD GARLIC, MUSHROOMS AND TOMATOES. MAKE SURE ALL IS COATED IN OIL, AND PARTIALLY COOK. ADD TEASPOON OF STOCK AND A SPLASH OF WATER - MIX! ADD ITALIAN WASHING, SALT, PEPPER AND PAPRIKA FOR SOME WARMTH (CAN MAKE IT MORE FIREY IF YA LIKE → STOCK IS QUITE SALTY, SO TASTE AND SEASON AS YA GO ☺). THEN ADD CHOPPED TOMATOES, AND LET SIMMER FOR A BIT AND PUT TO ONE SIDE.

KEEP A LITTLE FOR SPINACH FILLING

- SAUTE SPINACH AND GARLIC IN A FRYING PAN WITH OIL - PLACE A LID ON TOP TO HELP IT WILT. SOFTEN WILTED, ADD: SALT, PEPPER, CUMIN, GARLIC POWDER AND CHILLI POWDER. MIX IN SPICES, COVER AND TURN HEAT RIGHT DOWN. TAKE BAKED SWEET POTATO AND REMOVE SKIN. MASH THE POTATO FLESH SLIGHTLY BEFORE ADDING TO SPINACH. → IT LOOKS MESSY, BUT ITS JUST THE FILLING, SO ITS FILLING!

- ONCE MIXTURE IS READY, BOIL WATER IN A FRYING PAN. PLACE A LASAGNA SHEET IN ONE AT A TIME → (SO, I TRIED TO BOIL THEM ALL TOGETHER IN A POT - BUT THEY JUST ALL STUCK TO EACHOTHER ... ONE AT A TIME IN A PAN WORKS BETTER, TRUST ME.) IT ONLY TAKES A FEW MINS PER LASAGNA SHEET IN BOILING WATER. YOU WANT THEM TO BE MALLEABLE, BUT IF COOKED TOO MUCH THEY JUST FALL APART.

- ONCE SHEET IS PARTIALLY COOKED, PUT LASAGNA SHEET ON A CLEAN SURFACE → CHOPPING BOARD! SPREAD A LAYER OF GARLIC AND HERB CREAM CHEESE ON SHEET FIRST, THEN A TABLE SPOON OF THE SPINACH AND SWEET POTATO MIX AT THE TOP OF THE SHEET, AND ROLL INTO A TUBE!



HOW MANY ROLLS YOU MAKE IS UP TO YOU AND HOW MUCH YOU WANT!

- STACK THE ROLLS IN A BAKING DISH → YOU CAN EITHER LEAVE THEM UP, OR I STACK 2 ON TOP OF 3 IN A LITTLE POT... TO GIVE A LIL EXTRA, I PUT MORE CREAM CHEESE IN BETWEEN THE ROLLS SO IT MELTS INTO THE SAUCE!



- FOUR TOMATO BASED SAUCE OVER THE STACK - GIVING AN EVEN COVERAGE. ADD GRATED CHEESE (I USED WOLFE GRATED CHEDDAR), THEN PLACE ON MIDDLE SHELF OF OVEN FOR 15/20 MINS.

I SUGGEST PUTTING CRACKED BLACK PEPPER ON TOP OF THE CHEESE. IT HELPS LIFT IT UP A BIT. ENJOY! PUT SOME NUTRITIONAL YEAST ON TOP!

- AND ENJOY! → THIS WILL MAKE ENOUGH FOR TWO, IF YOU HAVE IT WITH A SIDE (GARLIC BREAD & A SALAD) OR ITS A NICE BIG MEAL FOR ONE ON ITS OWN. IF YOU WANT TO MAKE IT FOR A FAMILY, JUST DOUBLE THE AMOUNT OF INGREDIENTS ♡

Figure 7.4: Illustration of meal notes by Ella Bean.

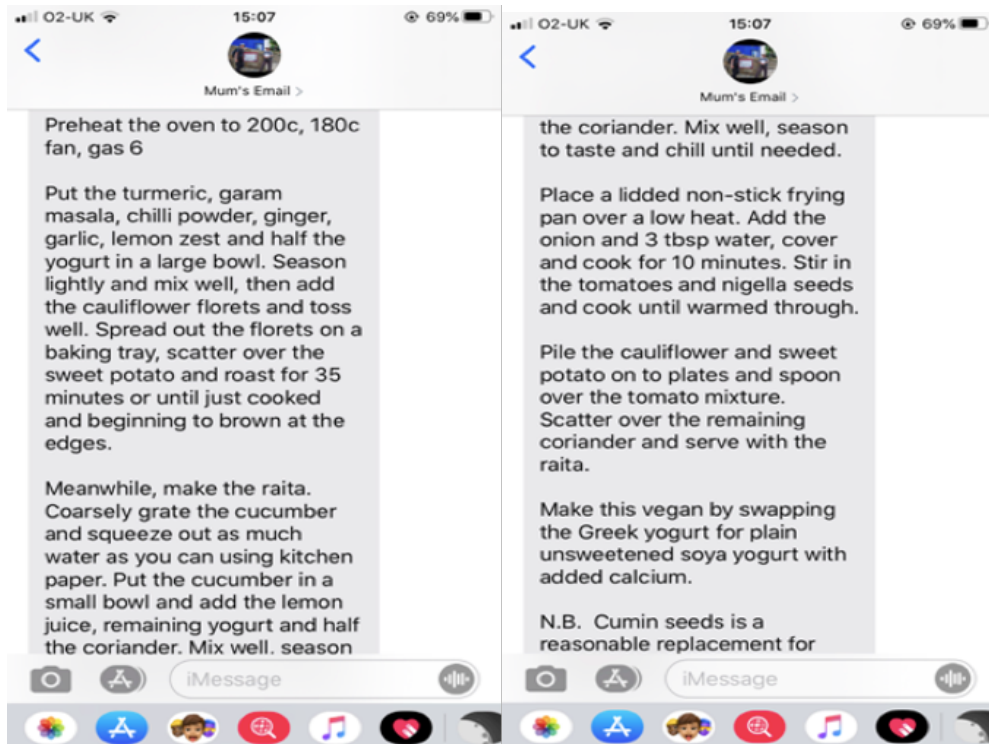
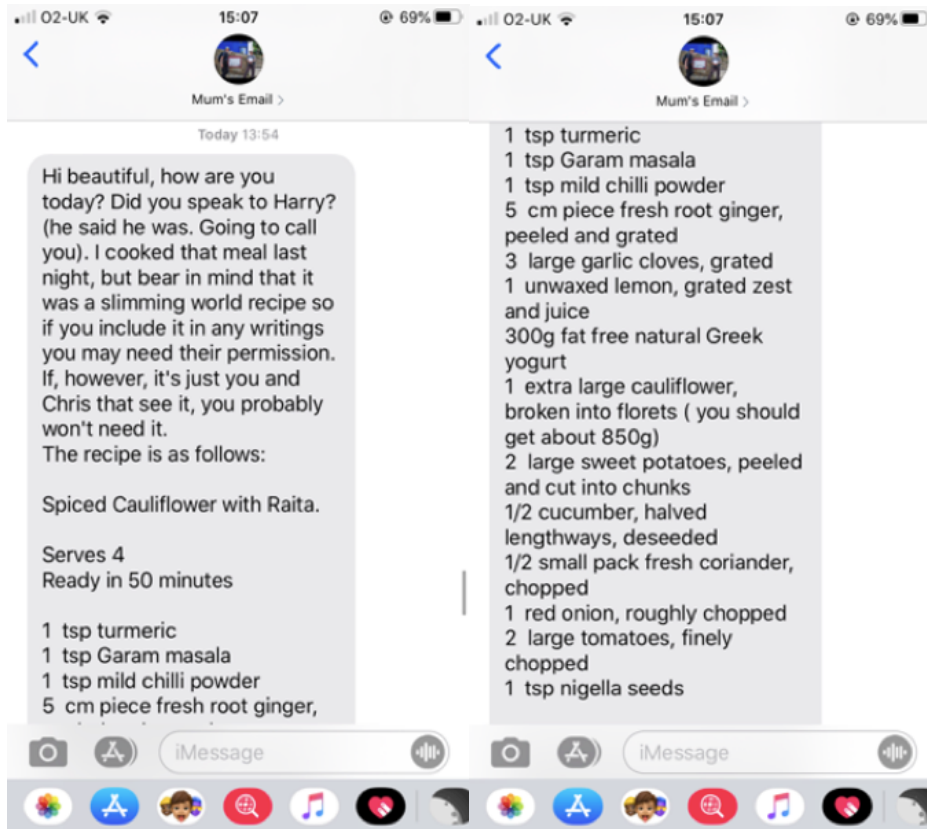


Figure 7.5: text message notes of Katheryn's parents' meal.

Receiving the recipes in this way was a moment of intimacy. Ella is an illustrator and the way she composed her recipe is reflective of her skill and care; this felt like a gift.

Ella offered up her participation in this without any expectation of something in return. The illustration was unexpected and given to us. The text chain from Katheryn's parents (see Figure 7.5) indicates the relationship shared between them and how sharing this recipe was an act of love. This was understood as an act of love due to the enthusiasm and openness with which Katheryn's parents responded to the request to share a recipe, which is typical of how they have responded to all aspects of our practice, which goes beyond any sense of familial duty to an expression of love: of wanting to care about and support this work because we care about this work, and that being enough.

Receiving recipes in this way helped us feel connected to people we were separated from. For us, the pleasure we gained from these two recipes was different to how we felt about the other meals. Where previously, pleasure was about taking joy in a task for its own sake (specifically cooking, but discussed in Chapter Four through craft), as a way of slowing time, here, the pleasure did not come from cooking or eating, but from reading about the experience of people we care about, and their relationship to the food. It came from the connection to loved ones and the ways they experienced the joy of food and of seeking pleasure. In providing us with their experiences, our loved ones took the task of documenting the meal project from us for two meals, and so we were again able to return to being in the moment and enjoying it. We found pleasure in these meals existing outside our experience, or rather, of a way of sharing and absorbing another's experience through this act of love; a way of hosting one another.

## ***Derrida and Hospitality***

In 1996, Jacques Derrida gave a series of seminars about hospitality, which became the subject of two published lectures, *The Foreigner Question* and *Step of Hospitality / No Hospitality*. These essays were collected in 1997 in a book titled *Of Hospitality* in which the philosopher Anne Dufourmantelle offers an 'invitation' which is conducted in the form of a response. The book consists of two texts (one on each side of the double pages of the book), with Derrida's text on the right and Dufourmantelle's on the left, visually enacting the theory of hospitality that Derrida articulates. The construction of the book resonates with our own approach to research and working together. The way that the book allows for a double reading of the same words establishes a reading that can be generated by both responses. This unsettles the hierarchy of knowledge production, so that no one voice has authority over all the others. And, as Dufourmantelle's text is on the left side page, encountered before Derrida's, if reading across the pages, this maybe counteracts the hierarchy that Derrida's name and gender might cause. This connects to the way that our collaborative writing is produced (although ours is not written in two voices) through a conversation of ideas or thinking through writing. Dufourmantelle and Derrida's mode of writing also connects to the theme of hospitality, in the way that room must be made for the other through the layout of the text. Something of yourself must be given up to make room for another's voice.

For Derrida, hospitality offers a mode of questioning and challenging the comfort of self in relation to others and has use in the dismantling of systems that marginalise and segregate certain groups of people. In explaining the relationship between hospitality, host and the notion of the foreigner, Derrida states:

absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names. (2000: 25)

Derrida does not offer insights into how being hosted might be received by the guest (he takes the position of the host), whereas Dufourmantelle considers how this encounter would be received, how it would feel 'when we enter an unknown place, the emotion experienced is almost always that of an indefinable anxiety. There then begins the slow work of taming the unknown, and gradually the unease fades away' (Derrida and Dufourmantelle, 2000: 26). To be a good host then is to support the guest in their unease, through a combination of time (the 'gradually') and care (attempting to make the guest comfortable in their anxiety). Hosting a friend (rather than a stranger) might mean that your friend isn't entering an unknown place, or an unknown dynamic. But the guest is still entering someone else's (private) space; there is an intimacy in being welcomed into a place that isn't part of the host's public life. There is an unease in being in someone's private space, and a generosity in the host countering that unease. The process of becoming not foreign to one another, of becoming comfortable with one another to share food, *is* the process of becoming friends. This process of becoming not strangers allows the 'thinking in dialogue' of friendship to take place.

Even though we are already friends, hosting one another throughout 2020 still revealed the ways in which we welcome or make at ease the other. This included how inviting a close friend into the private sphere of the home makes the home known to the host in a different way. To illustrate this, due to rental precarity as

discussed throughout this thesis, Katheryn moved three times throughout 2020. Each time, a shift occurred in the feeling of home that the flat / house had once guests were invited in. When Chris came over to share a meal, the flat / house shifted from feeling unknown to Katheryn, as a new resident (learning the quirks of the building and the dynamic of the tenants), to one where Katheryn was showing Chris around and trying to make Chris feel comfortable and 'at home'. This in part produces a sense of familiarity (welcoming a friend into this house, as with previous houses, providing another connecting link between the different houses Katheryn lived in, beyond the possessions taken from house to house), and familiarity in showing and explaining the house to Chris – in saying out loud for the first time (for example) 'this is where the plates are kept' or 'that chair is broken' or 'push the door in this way to close it' (and thus acknowledging for the first time what we have come to learn about the house). The house felt more like a home once a friend was hosted in it, in part because it revealed to the guest and as such the host the relationship between host and home, and in part because bringing a friend into the home brought out another aspect of self and plurality of the host, who had been in effect also a stranger to the house just as the house was a stranger to the host.

Hosting one another and paying attention to this process also revealed the delicate social dynamics at work between host and guest. Hosting and being hosted was fun, but it still connected to the ideas Derrida and Dufourmantelle put forward about making space for the stranger. We discuss the reciprocity below in hosting a friend, whereas Derrida and Dufourmantelle discuss the anonymity of the stranger means not asking for reciprocity. This suggests to truly make space for the other is not a transactional process, and reciprocity suggests something akin to (though less

formal than) the transactional. However, this reciprocity is not to be taken for granted. There is a difference between the cultural ritual behaviours associated with (for example) a dinner party that are reciprocal (i.e., bringing a bottle of wine) and the aspects of hosting that are not reciprocal, i.e., to make space and truly welcome in someone might mean running the risk of transcending social conventions of how you as a host expect your guests to behave.

The relationship between sharing food, hosting, and our jobs in hospitality led us to think about the different statuses of friendships we make time for and work at, and friendships that come about temporarily in workplaces, due to a temporary commonality. These latter friendships are based on shared experiences, and mutual support in the workplace, but do not bridge the private and public realms in the same way that more intimate established friendships do. Instead, these workplace friendships resonate more with Derrida's description of hospitality: where one might attempt to make space for and welcome the 'new' colleague, or the new colleague might need time to feel at ease; but unless these relationships overcome their status as bonded by a commonality (i.e., work), they remain in public. We have many friendships that began as collegial, and that are now long-term intimate friendships that exist in private and public. We see this also in the shared housing we described in Chapter Three, whereby a stranger moves in to share the home. Attempts are made to host the new housemate, to put them at ease, to varying success, thus complicating the feeling of being at home. In the house share described in this thesis, making food for one another was a key method of 'taming the unknown' (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000: 26).

This analysis of hospitality also applies to the meals Ella and Katheryn's parents shared (via illustration and text messages) with us. When finding a way to describe (and share) the meal Ella had eaten with the people she was in lockdown with, Ella went beyond anything we expected. Ella's gift of her time and skills manifested in the illustration (see Figure 7.4). This links to hospitality, in terms of offering up something of the self. In taking part in *The Meal Project* by describing and sharing her meal, she was in effect hosting us. She chose to use a method that is special to her to translate the meal to text, and gifted this to us, and as such we felt welcomed into her meal even though we weren't present for the event of the meal. In a similar way, Katheryn's parents' method of sharing their meal makes sense to how they communicate and share information. That their participation came from a sense of love and of obligation towards the other relates to our understanding of hospitality. Because of there already being a shared relationship between these others and us the burden of hospitality is much less significant, although perhaps the sense of obligation is stronger because these people do not want us to be let down. Through hospitality and 'gift giving' there is a sense that one identifies the self through the other. In the life of the mind Arendt notes that, '[l]iving beings, men and animals, are not just in the world, they are *of the world*, and this precisely [is] because they are subjects and objects—perceiving and being perceived—at the same time' (Arendt 1971: 20). In receiving these versions of the recipes, they remind us that we existed in a world with others. This seems like a silly thing to say, but during lockdown it was easy to forget the relationships we have beyond our immediate circle and lockdown bubble. In terms of our performance writing this allowed us to see what it could do, in connecting to others, in connecting to friends, and in offering a space for hospitality. It shifted our position from makers to subject and object.



## **Conclusion**

To return to the initial questions we asked at the beginning of *The Meal Project*:

1. How important is the act of cooking together as opposed to, or in relation to, the sharing of the food that is prepared?
2. How might food connect us to people who cannot be present?

Ultimately, these questions guide the performance writing (*Recipe Book*) produced as a result of the generative process of *The Meal Project*. The acts of cooking and eating together shared equal importance, though involved subtly different processes of negotiation and figuring out. (For example, how to cook in someone else's house, or the difference between eating food you shared in the preparation of compared to eating food that was made for you). Our understanding of 'sharing' shifted from what we initially imagined as a literal thing (of eating food in the physical presence of one another) to ways that food might be shared virtually or through documentation, or through gifts that enabled us to access other people's meals. The hauntological aspect, of considering ways to connect to those we aren't with, became more central than anticipated due to the worldwide pandemic event of 2020. Using food as a mode of slow pleasure and as a way to be together took on a different quality when time became experienced in a different way due to a change in routines and work patterns and socialisation as a result of lockdown.

Throughout the process of *The Meal Project*, we established parameters to aid us in our note-keeping (in order to use this to generate performance writing). These were:

1. To maintain a degree of specificity as to the recipe: i.e, being clear about what ingredients we used, the step by step process, where the original recipe came from (if required), anything we found difficult or would change in the future.

2. To note anything we did differently to how either the original recipe instructed or to how we have cooked the meal previously. This included for example noting where we substituted ingredients based on availability. This step was important to us beyond simply wanting to record accurately what we did. This step sometimes inadvertently documented precarity or aspects of being in lockdown (for example, not being able to get particular ingredients due to cost or it not being supplied locally). This step also made us consider further access needs, such as needing to substitute ingredients due to dietary requirements. It became increasingly apparent during the year (2020) of *The Meal Project* that the performance writing would incorporate something of this idea of changing a recipe or flexibility in the recipe. (In Chapter Nine we discuss how and why we incorporated this into our performance writing in detail).
3. To note details about the event of the meal; i.e, our experience. This included noting who was present and who we might wish had been there, noting the inspiration behind the meal if appropriate, and how we felt about the meal.

*The Meal Project* was a method of producing performance writing that revolves around food and its wider political, social, and economic issues surrounding precarity, specifically as finding ways to be together and care for one another as millennials experiencing precarity. Food has and continues to be an important medium for artists, exploring relationships of reciprocity, of the political dimension of food (its production, consumption and sustainability), its socio-political dimension (of community, of shared experience), as an economic resource, and perhaps as a by-product of food and art, the relationship between food and power. For example

through the description of relational aesthetics being less about hosting (and a service economy instead of a goods based economy) and more about a self limiting site of encounter due to a lack of friction (as discussed earlier in this chapter via Claire Bishop's analysis of Rirkrit Tiravanija food based works). Food is important to us in our friendships, working lives, homes and in this thesis in relation to a politics of friendship, resistance, and hospitality. Many of the examples discussed describe the importance of being *with* the food; of constructing and consuming it.

There is a reciprocity in hosting friends, but this cannot be taken for granted. In the anthology *The Anthropology of Friendship* (Bell and Coleman: 1999) reciprocity and friendship is referred to in multiple essays. Robert Paine states 'the ideal of friendship rests not on the compulsion of reciprocity; rather, one gives freely of oneself and hopes to receive in the same spirit (1999: 42), highlighting that even if friendship is not thought of as transactional, there is a hope attached to friendship that what is given in friendship is returned in some form. Claudia Barcellos Rezende expands on this notion. Rezende was raised in Brazil, and found when working in England in the 1990's that workers extend their workplace relationships into post-work social time, such as through going to the pub (in contrast to the author's experience in Brazil). This is used to establish reciprocal relations (such as buying rounds of drinks for one another) to translate these relationships into work-based friendships (1999:88). In our own lives, we notice acts of reciprocity in hosting in the form of taking turns to host or in the form of a gift (for example, the guest bringing a bottle of wine to share), or less formally, in the form of enjoying the company of your friend. In making space to host, we gain the company and social nourishment of our friend (even though our project did not set out to explicitly consider nourishment, it is

a by-product of sharing food). This understanding of hospitality further highlights the differences between, for example, Tiravanija's work and *Sunday Soup* or Lacy's work. The latter make space for the audience and participants, for example, by opening up the means to vote and offering transparency. It is unclear though how participants in a Rirkrit Tiravanija work are hosted: receiving food does not equate to being hosted, and there is a social pressure on the guest too to perform as required for the sake of the project. Such a project isn't so much about making space for the guest as it is about fulfilling the desires of the artist.

We hoped our methodology of sharing food would move us away from a model akin to how relational aesthetics is described here, to a reflective model that would allow us the space to analyse how friendship and food are related, and how this relates to hospitality, and then how we would translate this into performance writing.

Derrida's description of hospitality and Arendt's position on friendship share aspects of public and private selves and aspects of plurality. Whilst applying Arendt's concepts to friendship suggests that friendship offers a space to rehearse our political – or public – selves. This suggests that friendship has a degree of privacy, away from the public, to do this. Hospitality involves making space (within the private sphere) for another, be it stranger or friend (as whilst Derrida refers to the stranger, we apply this concept to friendship also). *The Meal Project* brings these two concepts together, of hosting and making space for one another and as a place to rehearse our political selves: of how to share space, of how to meet one another's needs, to consider how the food will nourish one another, to relieve each other in turn of the need to maintain an aspect of daily life (offering food for your friend

means they are relieved from feeding themselves for that meal), of practising reciprocity (taking turns to host one another), and of trying to negate any sense of obligated reciprocity, of experiencing the changing status of playing host and being hosted, and of gift giving. Friendship offers rehearsal for a space of appearance – a space for action and hosting offers up space to the other. Both these concepts share a friction, a negotiation of self and other.

By considering the relationship to ‘foodly’ practices and performance writing, the chapter firmly establishes generative processes as a characteristic of performance writing. In doing so, it connects a method of performance writing that situates and interrogates our experience of millennial precarity with an analysis of hope and friendship, addressing the third aim of the thesis ‘to analyse hope and friendship in millennial precarity’. This is achieved by identifying a recent history of food and contemporary art practices that places food as a social practice that brings different groups of people together, which we use as a framework to understand our demarcated act of sharing food together. This supports our analysis of food in relation to friendship and collaboration; demonstrating further our use of friendship as a collaborative autoethnographic research methodology. The chapter functions to think about being with others and the role of hospitality within this.

## Preface to Chapter Eight

This chapter is presented to illustrate the approach to performance writing that *Recipe Book* takes, and includes some of the text of *Recipe Book*. *Recipe Book* is described and analysed in Chapter Nine. This writing was produced as a result of *The Meal Project*, a series of meals shared between us throughout 2020, as discussed in the previous chapter. The chapter begins with the instructions for how the recipes could be used or might be followed and gives detail for the different sections of the recipes and what they each mean. All information that appears in orange is taken from the book. Recipe one (Meal One), was made for Katheryn's birthday, and involved several friends. Recipe two (Meal Four), was the first of the meals that we made just between the two of us. We have chosen recipes that illustrate our experimentation with different approaches to meal sharing that we undertook as our opportunity to be together in person was impacted by the events of the 2020 pandemic.

The chapter illustrates one mode through which we are developing a wide range of performance writing strategies, in this case through recipes that are formatted in the style of Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse*. This suggests a use value of performance writing (the second research aim being to define the use value of performance writing), through bringing together performance writing and literary theory, that performance writing might offer insights into how other score-based texts can be read. This particularly correlates to the first aim of the research in relation to developing a method of performance writing that situates and interrogates our experience of millennial precarity. How this is achieved is analysed through chapters

Seven and Nine. This example of practice is also important in terms of the third aim, 'to analyse hope and friendship in millennial precarity'. The intention of the recipes are that they will act as a score or an invitation for others to host their own meals that would then be productive at (re)producing friendship and hope.

To get the full experience from the recipes, we invite you to cook as many of the recipes as possible, and to change them however you see appropriate to your own likes and tastes, adding in your own addendums and souvenirs. In the back of your recipe books that you will receive there is space to do so.

Please note, all spelling mistakes and typographical errors have been left in here to reflect the text as it appears in *Recipe Book*. *Recipe Book* was made with the decision to leave mistakes in, as it is informal and non-academic writing and is an aspect of how we produce performance writing; a practice that takes on colloquial characteristics that reflects how we communicate with each other as friends (being that our performance writing is produced through and of this friendship).

## Chapter Eight: Recipe Book

### Recipes / Addendums / Souvenirs

#### *How these recipes are constructed*

##### *food / friendship / care*

The recipes that follow are not necessarily ones we have come up with ourselves, however they have been shared together. Like all recipes, these can be taken literally, but they can (and should) be taken and changed to suit. The important thing about the recipes is the potential of them to be shared, but likewise, they may also be eaten alone. The recipes consist of three parts; together offering the things needed to recreate the meals we have had.

#### 1. *Recipes*

The traditional format of an ingredient list, followed by the instructions which need to be followed in order to complete the recipe and cook the food in the way that is intended. These follow a similar structure for each meal. This part of the writing might be considered as a readerly text. However, as some of the recipes are not fully our own invention we have had to change some of the steps slightly in order not to get into trouble<sup>68</sup>.

Recipes in this way are used often and in a range of settings, they are structurally familiar and easily recognisable. Recipes are cultural artifacts, we have given measurements that may not be suitable for some audiences. We have tried to keep the instructions as clear and as easy to follow as possible. This part of the text can stand alone - someone may choose to only follow this part.

#### 2. *Addendems*

*Add-end-ems* as is the case with any, and all, recipes there is a level of interpretation which comes here. In this section of the text we highlight the ways that we changed and mixed up the ingredients, the process of making or any extra bits we might have added in or taken away. This is a process of personalisation, for example we will always add double the amount of garlic to

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<sup>68</sup> Please see Appendix D for fully referenced recipe bibliography.



any ingredient list, someone else might choose to make something extremely spicy (something that we could not handle).

It is also an invitation; for others to change the recipe to suit their own needs (and those of any other guests they may be entertaining). This section might see people create the meal for people with specific dietary needs e.g. vegan, halal, celiac etc. People may also wish to change certain spices, flavours or ingredients dependent on availability or budget. This section opens up the recipe to manipulation.

### 3. *Souvenir*

These are our personal memories and reflections that we associate with the recipes, foregrounded by our first memories of eating the meals. This is the point where we think about and reflect on the relationship between food and memory. This is where we hope to connect to others through the ways that we share food and the things that we remember about what the sharing of the food was like.

In a similar way to section two, this section invites active participation from those who engage with the recipes. Reflect on who they were with when they first ate, what the food might remind them of, how the food might help them to care for themselves, care for other people and care for each other.

This section of the text is about the specifics of the performance of cooking (and of eating).

## **Meal One (14th Jan 2020)**

*birthday / friends / beginnings*

We decided to use K's birthday as our starting point for the meals; we had chosen this in order to incorporate the project with the celebrations. We wanted to select something which might be fun to do together, something that 'pretty much everyone likes', so we decided to make pizzas - we wanted to do this from scratch and have lofty aspirations of how we intended the meal to be.

1. N.B. This recipe originally came from the BBC.

For the dough:

650g oo flour or strong white flour (we used bread flour).

7g packet easy yeast

2 tsp salt

25 ml olive oil (1 fl oz)

325 ml / 11fl oz warm water

Method: 1. Mix flour, yeast, salt in a large bowl & stir in olive oil. Gradually add warm water to form soft dough. 2. Transfer to a floured surface, knead for 5 minutes until smooth & elastic. Transfer to a clean bowl, cover with a damp tea towel, leave to rise for 90 minutes until doubled in size. 3. When risen, knock it back & knead again until smooth, roll into a ball & set aside for 30-60 minutes to rise again. 4. Preheat the oven to highest, divide dough into 6 balls and roll out onto a highly floured surface until 20cm in diameter. Put on your fave toppings and cook for 10-12 mins.

For the pizza sauce:

2tsp olive oil

1 small onion finely chopped

1 fat garlic clove (we used 4)

2 400g tinned chopped tomatoes

3 tbsp tomato puree

1 bay leaf

2 tbsp dried oregano

Pinch of sugar

Fresh basil (a bunch)

Method: 1. Heat oil, on a low heat, add onion and a generous amount of salt. Fry gently for 15 minutes until softened and translucent. 2. Add garlic & chilli cook another min, stirring continually. 3. Add puree, tomatoes, bay leaf, oregano, and sugar. Bring to the boil and simmer on a low heat, uncovered for 20-30 minutes until thick and reduced. 4. Stir in basil. Does 4-6 pizzas.

Variations of roasted vegetables in olive oil as toppings

Garlic (whole cloves)  
Courgette  
Aubergine  
Red onion  
Pepper  
Mushrooms  
Oregano and  
Garlic (whole cloves)  
Tiny potatoes, chopped  
Rosemary

2. When making these pizzas, it is important that guests feel they have autonomy over them. The cheese used can be changed depending on specific dietary needs (for vegan cheese for example - however this is not a great substitute for the real thing) / Our preference is towards a thin base, this means that fewer toppings are required as they are unable to be supported / There can be so many different variations here, our suggestion of toppings include; mushrooms, goats cheese and onion, egg and spinach or simply cheese tomato and garlic. However anything goes, feel free to take risks.
3. So, we had made the dough before we had left to go walking, this was a fairly calm moment and we had time to discuss some of the rules around the project, as well as eating breakfast. It was a fairly 'slow' way of preparing the food and we also had some time to start making up some toppings for the pizzas - to make the cooking / topping of the pizzas process a little biteasier. We decided that we would share two different pizzas (one pizza each, shared).

Making the pizzas in this way was really good, and shifted how I thought of pizzas as a 'quick meal', putting the time and the effort into making the food in this way made me reconsider how I normally consume pizzas (although I have since returned to pizza as a 'quick' and 'convenient' meal).

We spent time together in the morning making the dough; I really enjoyed having this time just us. I thought I'd really love making the actual pizzas, but by then we were starving from our walk, and more people turned up than I expected, and I felt really overwhelmed. C got on really well with my friends, but G had to take over making the pizzas for everyone as I was getting flustered. I'd just gone vegan two weeks beforehand, so I didn't have cheese. I remembered Ben saying if you have lots of other fats you don't miss the cheese on pizza, so I put on avocado and a drizzle of oil and pine nuts alongside veggies and it really worked. I felt very grateful for the evening but I also remember thinking 'if i do a pizza party again I'm not inviting more than 6 people'. I repeated this the following year on my birthday. This time because

of lockdown it was just me, G and my housemates E & H. G took over again fortunately.

With there being so many people in a fairly small flat, although the kitchen was much bigger than mine it was still difficult to navigate the pizza making experience and I think that K was really a bit stressed about it all. It was nice for me to meet people and chat with others, everyone was also drinking - I had red wine. After we had eaten the pizzas we all went to the pub, and I think K was fairly relieved by the time it was time to go.

## **Meal Four (No date 2020)**

*unplanned meal / mushrooms / vegan*

We submitted this recipe to Sharon Kivland's *Recipes Unconfinement*. We had not intended that this would be classed as a meal when we made it, we thought that we were just sharing food together and discussing our work as we usually do. We had intentions that the project would be a bit stricter but as we began to move further in we started to notice that this might not be so significant and the act of food sharing might be the most important aspect.

### 1. Ingredients:

Small onion, finely chopped

Olive oil

Punnet of mushrooms sliced

The best part of a bulb of garlic, finely chopped

A decent glug of single soya cream, adjust as required

Few Sprigs of dill, leaves picked

Sourdough toast to serve, buttered

Salt and pepper to season

Method: 1. Gently heat the oil, season well and sweat the onions in the oil until soft, without them catching. 2. Add the mushrooms. Stir well and allow to sweat, softening them not browning them. Add more oil if needed. 3. Add garlic, stir well and give time for the flavour to absorb, don't let it burn. 4. Add a smallish glug of cream and a sprig of dill, leaves picked. 5. Let it thicken. Can add more cream as needed. 6. Serve over buttered toasted sourdough, with some more dill as a garnish.

2. White onion might be best. But can use red too, whatever you have / Adjust oil as needed / Use a lot of mushrooms. They'll shrink down a lot / To stop the mushrooms from catching, or to prevent using too much oil, add a splash of water. It can sometimes give the mushrooms a slightly more chewy texture, but it makes the creamy sauce more mushroomy / Avoid using too much cream so it's not too rich. If you don't have cream in, use a splash of soya milk. Or if you aren't dairy free use dairy cream / Only use the Dill if you're feeling fancy, it's fine if you don't have any / If you want a big meal, wilt in spinach at the end. Or mash avocado on your toast, or grill some tomatoes with a little dried oregano and oil.

3. In the end it was our last meal that we were able to have in person together for a long time, I think the next time we ate in person would have been C's birthday in August, when we were able to sit in the garden to eat. We had this alongside some avocado and some spicy tinned beans with spinach mixed in. I only recently began enjoying mushrooms as a main feature. I began eating a vegan diet in January and I think that is when I started enjoying mushrooms more. I remember, early on in the year, going for breakfast with some friends to a vegan cafe and ordering garlic mushrooms, and I felt really satisfied. That cafe meal was a month or 6 weeks or so before the pandemic became part of our daily lives, and we had no idea how shit 2020 would turn out to be. Five out of the six of us at that breakfast all worked together, but now only two of us are still in that job. Most of us had planned to move into a houseshare together in the summer, but again only two of us (a different two) were able to. I guess these mushrooms remind me of a time when I didn't wake up anxious every morning. I've continued to make them regularly since, with friends or alone, and they are a source of comfort and an indulgence and eating mushrooms makes me feel like I'm caring for myself.

Before that day, mushrooms were a side. Me and C often make breakfast together and mushrooms would be a little addition on a massive plate of food. We can be quite greedy when it comes to food, especially food we've cooked ourselves. I think having mushrooms as the main part of the meal now somehow makes me feel love. It connects me to my friends. I really look forward to this now, it makes me want to get out of bed.

I think we made this together the first time that we were able to meet up together to work (for the brief time that restrictions were lifted). I really loved the meal and all of the parts that went into it, I have always really liked mushrooms and I think that this is a perfect recipe to add to a list. I think we may have made this meal a number of times since then.

Whilst we ate we spoke a lot about stuff that had happened to us in work during the week. We also spoke about this project and what we had wanted to do for the next few meals. We came up with some themes and occasions where we might want to have meals for - Easter, birthdays, Christmas etc. We had not realised that this might be one of the last times we were going to be together for a while.

## **Meal Eleven (18th June 2020)**

*further experiments / something new / food journey*

As things continued, we decided that we would continue with experimenting with different ways of sharing food.

For June we decided that we would each make a meal that we would then transport around to the other person's house. Meaning that we would be both eating the same food, but still in different locations.

### 1. Red Rice Ingredients:

200g cherry tomatoes

120ml olive oil

2 red peppers cut into 1cm strips

1 large onion cut to 1 cm slices

Tin of chickpeas, drained

Salt and pepper

4 garlic cloves, peeled and thinly sliced

40g tomato paste

1 - 2 tsp caster sugar

½ tsp ground allspice (pimento)

1 tsp ground cinnamon

8 cardamom pods, lightly bashed open

2 tsp smoked paprika

1 chili thinly sliced

350g basmati rice

1 lemon

4 tbsp coriander leaves, chopped

Method: 1. Put a large saute pan (with a lid) on high heat. Once very hot, add tomatoes and sear for 5 minutes, shaking occasionally, until they are charred. Transfer the tomatoes to a bowl and set the pan aside to cool down a little. 2.

Return the pan to a medium high heat, add 75ml oil followed by the pepper, onions. Chickpeas, 1 ¾ tsp salt, and a good grind of pepper. Cook for 7

minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened then add the garlic and chili and cook for 3 minutes more, until the vegetables have taken on the same colour.

Add the tomato paste, sugar and spices and cook stirring for 90 seconds, then add the rice and charred tomatoes and stir everything together. Pour in 750ml boiling water, cover the pan and put on the lowest heat for 15 minutes. Turn

off the heat, and leave the pan to one side, still covered, for 10 minutes. 3. Squeeze some lemon in. Stri in the coriander, leaving some to garnish when served.

2. We recommend using additional garlic and chili / I veganised this recipe but it would be good with feta and eggs / The rice may take longer to cook than it says in the recipe.
3. I cooked enough for both of us and cycled over the next morning (it was stormy the night I cooked it) so that C could have some. I felt it was quite bland. The next day I fried it with lots of chili and garlic and it was much nicer.

I think that this was a nice way to try and get around the issues of not being able to share the food at the same time, I like that we were both still eating the same food - that felt important. I like that the food went on a journey from one house to another, I like how it served as a connector between us both. I definitely think this was also a more interesting way to approach the issue of not being able to share the food together 'live'.

I had a slight incident when reheating the food, I burnt the bottom of the pan. In order to rectify this, I had to bring some water to boil in the pan and then added two teaspoons of baking soda. This caused a huge mess! But it did fix the problem of burnt food stuck to the bottom of the pan!



## **Meal Fifteen (6th August 2020)**

*my birthday / garden party / evening soiree*

We had the intention of having specific meal themes, and for my birthday we had planned to make a meal that was based on the celebrity Geri Halliwell (because we have the same birthday). We had tried to do research about the things that she likes to eat, and we had looked on her instagram, but could only see her pictured with steak. And also baking cakes.

### 1. White Bean Wafers Ingredients:

200g tinned white beans (eg, butterbeans), drained and patted dry  
200g plain flour  
½ tsp bicarbonate of soda  
½ tsp baking powder  
¾ tsp fine sea salt  
50g unsalted or vegan butter  
30g of water at room temperature  
Sea salt flakes

Method: 1. Using a pestle and mortar, mash the beans into a smooth paste. In a separate bowl, combine the flour, bicarbonate of soda, baking powder, and salt. Rub the butter into these dry ingredients, then add the bean paste and water, working well with your hands until you have a smooth dough. 2. Preheat the oven to 200c / 400f / Gas 6. Roll out the dough onto a floured surface until it is 3-4mm thick. Cut the dough into 5 x 10cm rectangles and place on a baking tray lined with non-stick baking paper. 3. Brush a little water down the centre of each wafer, sprinkle sea salt over (and / or whatever toppings you're using). 4. Bake in the centre of the oven for 15-20 minutes, or until light brown at the edges. Transfer to a wire rack to cool, then store in an airtight container.

### Smashed Aubergine Ingredients:

1 kg aubergines  
½ tablespoon salt  
4 garlic cloves skins left on  
5 tablespoons olive oil, plus extra for drizzling  
½ lemon, zest and juice  
3 tablespoons finely chopped parsley

Method: 1. Preheat the oven to 200c / Gas 6. Cut the tops off the aubergines and then cut them into approx 1-2cm sized cubes. 2. Put them in a sieve that

is set over a bowl, and sprinkle them with salt. Set aside for 30 minutes. 3. Bash the garlic with the flat of a knife to crack the cloves slightly. Lightly rinse the salt from the aubergines and pat dry with kitchen paper if available. If not give it a shake. 4. Toss the aubergine with the garlic, olive oil and lemon zest on a foil lined baking tray. (The aubergine gets quite sticky so can be difficult to clean off an unlined baking tray). Season (a little salt and pepper) and roast it for 30 - 40 minutes - or longer if required, until it is golden and soft. 5. Remove the aubergine from the oven and squeeze over the lemon juice. Mix it, and gently smash the aubergine with a fork, until it has a chunky consistency like a very thick sauce or dip. 6. Transfer it to a plate or bowl and garnish with parsley. Serve warm drizzled with a little oil.

#### Vegan 'Feta' and Spinach Spanakopita Ingredients:

12 oz fresh spinach, chopped  
1 bunch spring onions, chopped  
¼ cup dill, chopped  
¼ cup flat leaf parsley, chopped  
Salt - ¼ tsp for the spinach, extra for 'feta' (taste and adjust amounts as needed)  
¼ tsp black pepper  
Olive oil  
1 pack of filo pastry (equivalent to ½ pound)  
1 cup raw cashews, boiled for 25 minutes  
2 tbsp white wine vinegar  
1 tablespoon water  
More salt

Method: 1. Preheat the oven to 350f / 175c. 2. Brown the spring onions in a skillet or wok until [RM1] soft in some olive oil. 3. Add the spinach, salt and pepper and saute until wilted. Then take off the heat. 4. Strip in the dill and parsley, mix well. 5. Drain and rinse the cashews and pat dry with kitchen roll. Then blend the cashews, vinegar, water and a fair bit of salt until it is coarsely chopped - you may need to adjust the amounts of salt and vinegar until it resembles the saltiness and tang of feta as opposed to the creaminess of feta. 6. Pour this 'feta' into the spinach mixture and stir well. 7. Brush the bottom of the oven dish with olive oil. Place one sheet of filo pastry on it. You may need to fold the filo over if the dish is smaller than the pastry sheet. Repeat this process: make sure to brush each layer with oil as you build the spanakopita; every bit of pastry should be brushed with oil between layers. 8. When you have layered half the pastry sheets in this way, put all the spinach mixture on it and spread it out, then repeat the pastry layers (brushed with oil) on top of the spinach to make the top of the spanakopita, until all the pastry is used. 9. Bake for about 90 minutes though it may take longer. The top should

be golden brown: make sure it is cooked through to the bottom layers before serving.

#### Vegan Chocolate Birthday Cake Ingredients:

##### Dry:

2 ½ cups plain (all purpose) flour

2 ½ cups golden caster sugar

1 cup cocoa powder

1 tsp baking powder

½ tsp bicarbonate of soda

Pinch of salt

##### Wet:

2 ⅔ cups oat milk

⅔ cups a light oil such as vegetable

2 tbsp apple cider vinegar

1 tbsp vanilla essence / extract

##### Icing:

1 cup vegan butter

1 ¼ cups sifted icing sugar

¼ cups cocoa

1 tsp vanilla essence / extract

1-2 tbsp oat milk as needed

Method. 1. Preheat the oven to 350F / 180C. Prepare 2x 8" round baking tins; grease and line the tins with baking paper. 2. In a large bowl, mix all the dry ingredients and set aside. 3. In a medium bowl, whisk together all the wet ingredients. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and mix until just combined - don't overmix. 4. Divide the batter into 2 tins. Bake for about 40 minutes, until a skewer inserted comes out clean. When slightly cooled, run a knife around the edge of the tins to loosen the cake, tip the tin and remove the cake to finish cooling. 4. When cool, make the icing. Mix together gently all the icing ingredients, adding oat milk if it is too stiff. 5. Sandwich the cake together with the icing and ice the tops and sides of the cake.

2. Re: White Bean Wafers: You can use different toppings such as seeds or chili flakes, or incorporate different seasonings into the wafer. On this occasion I used Zaatar on top, because I thought it would go well with the aubergine.

Re: Smashed Aubergine: Could mix in other grilled vegetables, like tomatoes to bulk it out if you don't have enough aubergines (aubergines are kinda expensive). Or it amounts to approx 4 aubergines / Add at least 2 garlic cloves to whatever the recipe recommends / Can measure olive oil by sight, if it looks like enough oil it will do. It does not matter if you forget to drizzle olive

oil on at the end, or if you forget about the lemon / Only use the parsley if you want to feel fancy; it's a garnish and not a key ingredient / Salting is because aubergines used to be bitter and the salt draws this out, though most aubergines now have this bred out of them. So if you are short on time, skip this step. You could do it for the ritual of it / Bashing garlic enhances the flavour as it releases the oils / Zaatar also makes a nice seasoning / There are lots of ways to adjust or add to the basic recipe. This is a bit like baba ganoush, but less ingredients, less creamy / You could make this creamier with yoghurt or tahini (with tahini would be more like baba ganoush) / Or you could blacken the aubergines - grill the aubergines whole until the outsides are blackened, and then cut in half and scoop out the insides. Or could do this if the veg ends up burnt / Apparently aubergine is a good source of fibre.

Re: Spanakopita: I used bought pastry to make life easier, but obviously feel free to make the pastry from scratch - as this meal needs the texture of filo pastry it's probably better to just buy it / I actually used 2 packs of pastry (the equivalent of 1 pound) as this is what the internet called for. It felt like too much though, and it didn't cook all the way through / It's fine to use roasted cashews instead of raw cashews, apparently it's just got less nutritional value that way (I actually used roasted cashews because it's all I could find) / If you are good at planning you can soak the cashew in water overnight instead of boiling them.

3. Due to lockdown measures, dinner was more of an evening picnic so we could eat outside. C and Geri Halliwell share the same birthday, so to get ideas for what to make I DM'd Geri Halliwell on instagram to ask what she'd be having for her birthday tea. She did not reply. The only information I could find about food she likes is that she ate fish and chips during *The Spice World Movie*. However, she had pictures of things she'd baked on her instagram, so I tried to make a chocolate cake that looked similar to one she had made. C likes Greece and Greek food so I tried to make a Greek inspired meal. Also C said it would be a good idea because Geri used to be in love with George Micheal. I've never made spanakopita before and this recipe replaces the feta with crushed cashews. It needed more salt, and the pastry was undercooked. C & D did not know what's for tea, and I was cooking for about 4 hours when they got to the garden. Most of the parts of this meal involved baking, and I was surprised at how quickly we ate compared to how long it took to cook. . C & D didn't stay long, D seemed bored, and they both didn't want to take the birthday cake home so I was eating birthday cake for a week by myself. If you're making this whole meal save it for special occasions, it's not cheap to make. I really associate the white bean wafers and smashed aubergine with C.

K made me an amazing cake, it was vegan and very chocolatey. There was so much of it that we could only eat about a slice each and then the rest got saved and was eaten at a later date. I think that the cake must have taken a while to make, and it was so good. I hope that K thinks that it was worth it. I don't always think about / remember to get a birthday cake. So it felt quite special to have one made for me.

Re: White Bean Wafers: My dad showed me this recipe, it's from a bread book he really likes. He was taken with using beans in bread and pastry.

Re: Smashed Aubergine: I think this recipe came from the Waitrose food magazine originally, but the magazine is lost, and this is what is written in my recipe book. I used to get the magazine free as a 'perk' of a job I once had. This is literally the only thing I can remember from it and if it wasn't for this recipe I wouldn't remember the 'perk'.

I think I first made this when I was staying at my uncles flat for a couple of months (he wasn't there) in Leatherhead and commuting to work in London (in a department store). This was a strange time in my life, a bit like being on holiday because I was staying in someone else's home. I really enjoyed having sole access to a kitchen and cooked a lot. I was lonely at the time, and I appreciated how taking time with my food gave me a structure to my day. I made this when C and C came to visit for the night. At first they didn't want to eat it, because it does look unappetising, it looks slimy. But they tried it and liked it (it's honestly really tasty and full of flavor - as long as you like aubergines - and doesn't taste how it looks) and it became a favourite side dish.

I remember making this for a picnic in St James park with Y and C, but I couldn't have, because that picnic predates the Leatherhead meal. I think I've misremembered because I made white bean wafers for the picnic, and the last time I made the wafers I also made the smashed aubergine, so the two have become mixed together in my memory.

I first remember having this meal for K's birthday one year, we were invited round to her flat in Barking, and a small buffet had been made. I can not remember though if we also had to bring an item of food, or just drink. The dip was on the table and I can remember laughing about the way that it looked and not wanting to try it, once I tried it though I realised it was actually nice and have continued to enjoy it ever since.

I made this for R and M's wedding, where everyone brought food to share rather than having caterers. I argued with my dad because he said we were spending too much on food and can't afford to be so frivolous and I had tripled

the amount I normally make, and dad said it would get wasted. I was convinced everyone would want to eat it once they'd tried a little and that I needed to make loads, but I didn't think to put a note next to it on the buffet table saying 'it tastes much better than it looks' and no one touched it.

I tend to make this as a special occasion party dish, alongside other bits.

Re: Spanakopita: This Is from a blog called Veggies Don't Bite, recipe 'world's best Greek vegan spanakopita'.

Re: chocolate cake: This cake was so rich and moist and fudgy, it was really good, like a proper birthday cake. It went well with strawberries. The recipe says to store it in the fridge, I was eating it for days though without chilling it and it was fine. I wish we'd been able to share this with more people, I remember missing that aspect of living with lots of people. The recipe is from the blog 'It Doesn't Taste Like Chicken'.

## **Meal Twenty Five (22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020)**

*not the end / the end / last supper*

We wanted to actually be able to share a meal together in person so we had decided that it would be a good idea to get food from a take-away type place and to eat outside with it. The weather was not the greatest, with-it being December but we decided to do this anyway.

### 1. Ingredients:

Vegan kebabs

Fries with garlic sauce

Method: 1. Order on deliveroo. 2. Walk to the Northern Quarter and collect. 3. Find somewhere to sit outside and eat

Doner Summer: Is a chain of vegan food outlets that make vegan junk food (chicken and chips / Kebabs) they have a number of different shops in cities across the north (Leeds and York). They operate in Manchester from inside a bar called Yes. We both really like going to Yes and have been together a few times, it is a nice place to go for a drink and to eat. It is a fairly trendy place (hence the vegan junk food) and we used to like the other food that they did there so we were a bit disappointed when it changed to this, but after trying it we really liked it too. And got over it.

### 2. I actually can't remember what I ordered / they have a changing menu

3. We really like the vegan food at Yes Bar. As things are getting more serious again with the pandemic, we decided that instead of cooking and being indoors together (thus breaking the rules like we have for the last few meals) that we would walk to town and get takeaway. It's our last meal together of the year and it's christmas so it's like a christmas meal out. Doner summer kebab have moved from Yes Bar while pubs are shut to a takeaway place in Northern Quarter. G met me at mine and we walked to C & D's. We persuaded D to come join us. He's also like C and can never stop working, so he wasn't going to come, but his supervisors had just told him before we arrived to take a break over christmas. He said 'C said you'd be late' when we had to arrange to meet 30 minutes later than we originally had planned, even though we did this with several hours notice! We got about 15 minutes from their house when D realised he had already arranged to go running with a fiend and couldn't come. We ordered as we got near to town, then while waiting we went to Bird and Blend Tea to get some fancy tea for christmas. We sat in the square outside Fred Aldous eating (well, sort of sat and stood

as there are no chairs). There was a man who seemed dazed and an ambulance had been called and they were looking for him but he was trying to evade them. Later we walked to a couple of shops to run some errands. Shops are open at the moment. It was really cold. I wanted to go to Marks & Spencers food to get some bits for christmas dinner (it's my first christmas without my parents and i've not been able to see them in a year now, so I'm gradually buying some fancy bits for christmas to try and make it feel special in some way), but the queue was really bug so we sacked it off. Then we walked back to C & D's, arriving at the same time as D did back from his run. He gave me some cookies he'd made, and said 'C have you wrapped K's present yet?' and he replied 'No she can have it after christmas'. G said he finds the dynamic between me, C & D funny. We talked a lot about when we lived in London and our work experience there. I tried to give G some context but I think that side of things probably gets boring for him. I was very glad he came for food too though :)

We struggled a bit with eating the food and trying to find somewhere outside to sit. G was also with us, D was meant to come as well but half way down the road he realised that he had a meeting that he needed to go to so had to turn around and go back. We had ordered the food all together and I think we were short on cutlery or napkins, I can't remember which. But we managed to eat the food anyway.



## Chapter Nine: On Recipes as Performance Writing

This chapter discusses the final practice developed for this thesis, and represents the culmination of our research enquiry. The work made, *Recipe Book*, is an attempt to bring together many of the different components discovered throughout this thesis in to one work. Whereas previous works made for this thesis led to discovery about the potential for what performance writing can be and can do, here we intended to make something with these intentions in mind, designed to fulfil the previous discoveries. *Recipe Book* builds on the characteristics that performance writing might have, described throughout the thesis, in an attempt to make a writerly text, using Barthes theory of the readerly and writerly. We consider *Recipe Book* to be an object and an assemblage (discussed in this chapter in relation to food as an assemblage and memory as a significant aspect of our relationship to food). *Recipe Book* highlights process to be part of performance writing. This is through the experimentation phase (see Chapter Seven) and physically making the object (discussed in this chapter as a DIY process). The chapter considers how the mode of making (craft and DIY approaches) connects to millennial precarity, and offers modes of utilising the limits of that precarity for creative pursuits

Whilst recipes are instructional, and as such perhaps most obviously classified as readerly given that they follow a clear structure, we suggest in this chapter that recipes may function as performance writing scores with vast writerly potential. This is due to the relationship between a recipe and interpretation of a recipe and adapting this. Recipes may be shared and again altered in their sharing, returned to

over time and remade. We might eat the same recipe cooked by another and notice the differences in this iteration of the meal. There is an element of an emotional and narrative event within a recipe as they become connected to our personal histories. This list is not exhaustive, due to the relationship an individual or community might have with a recipe. As such, the chapter returns to the significance of literary theory discussed in Chapter Two in terms of imagining the encounter between performance writing and audience, and the significance of this imagining for the artist when making the work.

This chapter examines *Recipe Book*, the performance writing practice produced as an outcome of the process of *The Meal Project*. It focuses upon the textual qualities of the recipe book which is a further example of our performance writing practice. The recipes in our book are mainly structured in a way that mirrors the form of Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse* (1977); the recipes are informed by the aesthetics of writing on the page. As previously discussed, other texts of Barthes also inform our practice (*S/Z* and *The Preparation of the Novel*). Both *Recipe Book* and *A Lover's Discourse* start with instructions which explain how the book is constructed and offer suggestions how they could be read. As an experiment in performance writing, our recipe book is intended as part reflective document and part participatory artwork where the reader can activate the work through cooking. We therefore also examine the process of making and publishing the recipe book as a DIY art project. We establish recipes as a form of performance writing through *Recipe Book*, where recipes are a form of score making activated through its interaction. We connect Anna Deuze's definition of DIY art (2010) as a mode of framing participation with

art, we combine this with Barthes' theories of the readerly and writerly, finally considering the limits of these theories in our work in terms of participation.

Please now read through the recipe book, we invite you to make some of the recipes at a suitable moment, and to use the book to make notes etc. Should you be inspired to do so.

As has been discussed throughout this thesis, we utilise performance writing to make connections between writing and other artistic practices, but also issues specific to millennial precarity. It exists on the interdisciplinary boundaries of performance and writing. Recipes have a particular instructional quality to them that resonates with performance writing; we pick this up in our performance writing process and develop the recipes we have written in order for them to become performance writing. Barthes' use of food in his writing reveals that, as Sophie Eager notes, '[r]eflecting on food leads us to reflect on proximity or distance from others who do not share our tastes, and of expressing a sense of belonging or exclusion' (2021: 27). As such, writing about food does more than address the need to eat, and thus we argue connects to our definition of performance writing. This means the artist is displaced by the role of the imagination in the reader (and by reader we include the artist on revisiting the work), functioning as a writerly assemblage: recipes, food and performance writing all exist as a series of relations.

Whilst food has been used as a performance device (for example, we referred to Fluxus artist Alison Knowles in Chapter Two, and both her cooking performances and the accompanying performance score), recipes that are produced as

performance writing have largely been overlooked. Alison Knowles uses the instructions for making a salad as part of her performance, but these are written as very open instructions, the specifics of which are left to the reader to choose how to deal with. (The score states 'Make a Salad'). In contrast, a recipe for a salad would normally have enough detail of instruction that the reader is taken through the steps of making the salad; giving a list of measured ingredients, the order in which to use the ingredients, the steps for cooking any of the ingredients. The performance writing in our recipe book attempts to frame the recipe and the meal as a writerly performance, sharing elements of both performance scores and more specifically detailed recipes. Recipes themselves have been overlooked in this lineage of food as performance, and performance writing brings this writerly element of food to the fore. Recipes and scores share similarities in that they offer instructions, ways of making, and modes of doing. They hold different cultural meanings; the lineage of scores is rooted in performance practices, whereas recipes are more widely understood.

### ***Making a Book as a DIY Artwork***

The construction methods used in *Recipe Book*, like other practice-research for this PhD project, are DIY (Do-it-Yourself). DIY in its common usage refers to practices that utilise the resources and skills that someone might have available to them it also refers to the non-professional also. When we refer to DIY this is usually what we mean; for example, we use a process of cutting and sticking to make the zines, and photocopy these using the printer that we have available to us. DIY also refers to not outsourcing tasks you need to complete (for example, a repair job that needs doing in your home). When we refer to DIY aesthetics we are referring in part to a

shorthand for the 'homemade' qualities of our work, though the appearance of something we describe as having a DIY aesthetic will vary depending on the level of skill and quality of product we use in making the work. A DIY aesthetic also refers to the value we place on being able to make something for ourselves and others as opposed to buying what we need. We also draw connections to other contemporary artists who make work in this way (as highlighted in the Introduction to this thesis, especially Holly White). This is in keeping with the imperative to slow down and resist growth as discussed in Chapter Four and our discussion of Cruel Optimism in Chapter Three. DIY is often associated with the home (of doing repairs or making things for the home), and so there is an irony that something we place importance on in our practice we are prevented from engaging in with our homes due to the restrictions of private renting. For us, engaging in DIY within our practice also feels like a way to be 'at home' within the unheimlich home as a kind of grounding practice to where we live.

Anna Dezeuze provides a different definition and perspective for what she calls a DIY artwork. For her, the focus is placed more heavily on the role of the audience member. Dezeuze describes do-It-yourself art as beginning in the 1960s with Fluxus and typified as 'a range of artistic practices that require an active physical and/or conceptual participation on the part of the spectator. This category of works (...) is not unified by formal characteristics' (2010: 1) but may include performance scores, art works designed to be touched or played with, or spatial environments. This definition is complementary to our project of performance writing. Central to Dezeuze's DIY approach is that 'the do-it-yourself artwork is a practice that exists *only* through a potential participation' (2010: 3-4). Within the principles of Dezeuze's

use of the term DIY, the participation comes through the relationship between the artwork and the audience (or participant). If we apply this idea to performance writing, using a score as an example: a performance score may range from being very open, abstract, and poetic, to more instructive. A score, even when instructional, is unfixed and open to experimentation, 'the outcome of which is unknown' (Dezeuze, 2010: 9). Whilst this thesis is not about audience reception, applying Dezeuze's definition is useful for us as part of the process of making performance writing, and these understandings inform our critical decision making.

While our recipe book can exist as an object that is left unread or can exist only as an object that is read and not acted on, it is also an object that, when acted on has a multitude of outcomes at the hands of the reader-audience. As an object that consists of the words on the page and the other aspects that make up the book (the materiality, the quality and feel of the paper, the cover design, any images) a recipe book has power; it is an object that the reader collaborates with in the act of cooking. It is a projection onto the future (the potential to cook a recipe) and a memorialisation of the past (a document of a tested recipe). Within a recipe book there is the potential for the authorial voice to be usurped by the user, or by the knowledge of the culture and traditions around each recipe that sit outside of the contents of the book. Recipes evolve and are handed down through generations; even with an author's name on it a recipe cannot be 'owned' in the traditional sense. (An argument against this might be if someone makes the recipe for profit, such as in a restaurant, but even then recipes act as inspirational building blocks that can be altered).

The six recipe books we have produced are A5 hard backed. They follow the same colour theme we have used throughout this PhD practice, with grey covers and orange details (such as binding thread and page marking ribbon), this is the last piece of practice made for this research and therefore will be the last time that we use these colours. The colours become a way of holding the research together, offering a stylistic connection between the performance writing that we have made. Likewise, the pages are put together the same way we have made the zines through a process of cutting and pasting. We compiled blank signatures (pages folded to make mini books which are bound together to make the complete book) and printed out our text, cut it to fit the desired size and placement on the page, glued it in place to the signatures and scanned it to the computer. A friend helped us print these at her university, using InDesign to streamline the printing process. We repaid her with dinner and drinks (she would not take money). We then bound the signatures using saddle stitch and glued the spine to set it, trimmed the page edges with a scalpel to make them uniform, attached orange end papers, attached orange ribbon as a bookmark and grey head and tail bands, sealed the spine by gluing linen over it, cut the coverboards and spine to size using grey book cloth and glued these to the book, being careful to weigh everything down at each gluing stage.

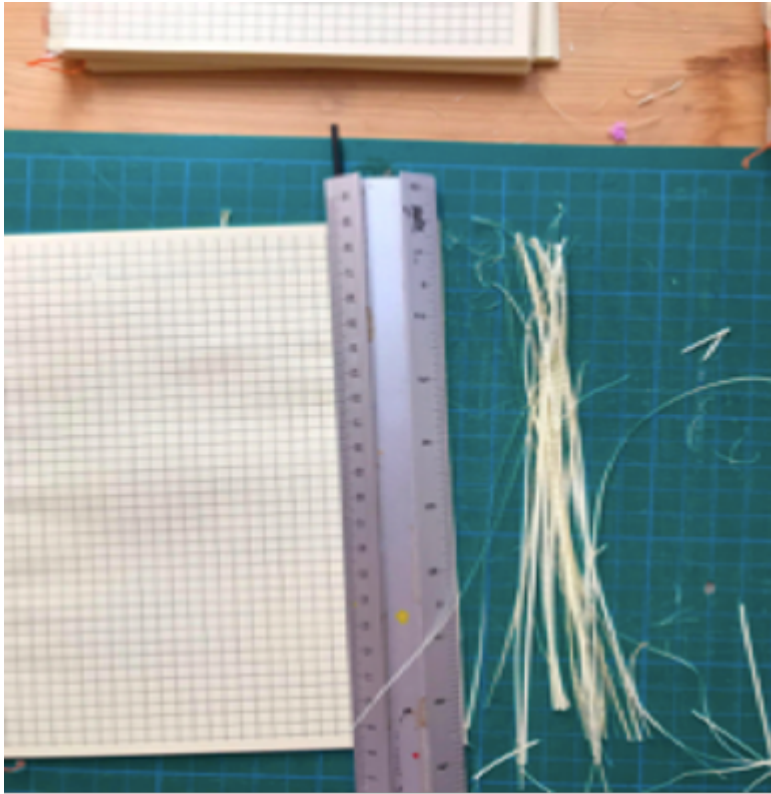
The quality and success of each step varies with each book (for example, how well the paper holds against the glue, there are some of the run of books that have much more bumpy and crispy pages than others), providing once again the DIY aesthetic of the work. We used instructions to help guide us in the making process that had been written by a housemate in 2015-6 when we lived together in the house described in Chapters One and Three and in *House Box*. Drawing on our friendships

in the physical making of this work for the aspects we lacked the skills ourselves is important here. This is not intended to exploit the kindness of friends, but instead is a reflection of a reciprocal mode of care, and of a communal approach to skills sharing. The only images that are included in *Recipe Book* are of the text messages and illustration for the two recipes (see Figures 7.4 and 7.5 in Chapter Seven) that were donated to us by Katheryn's parents and friend. We describe this process to emphasise the handmade-ness and DIY quality of the objects that we were able to produce with limited book-making resources or skill. This is a more common usage of the term DIY than Dezeuze's application of the term to describe how audiences participate in artwork.











**Figures 9.1- 9.9: showing the construction of the recipe book.**

The materiality of the recipe books differs from the other recipe books we have at home which are fairly glossy, with thick shiny covers whether hardback or paperback. Instead, the recipe book we have made has a cloth cover pasted over hardboard. The paper inside isn't thick or shiny but is an off-white colour that we find comfortable for our eyes, and is a standard printer 80gsm thickness, so that we

could easily print on it. From the outside, our recipe book looks like a notebook, and it is made from the same materials as handmade notebooks we have previously made as gifts for friends. We have left pages for notes, and as much as it is a recipe book, its form invites marking and altering through notation.

We decided not to include photography in the book, despite taking photos, which Chris shared to his Instagram account during each meal. There is a relationship between food and photography, as aspirational rather than depicting the reality of a meal: the ‘openly dream-like cookery’ as described by Barthes in *Mythologies* (Barthes, 1993: 79). Often, the recipe books on our shelves are punctuated with sumptuous, glossy photographs, which the meals we cook from them never really resemble. Our decision to not include photographs was largely because we did not want to lead with an idea of what the recipes should look like, and we felt that the visuality of the image could distract from the intention that the recipes can be altered. Aesthetically, this also recalls the personal recipe book that someone may collect recipes from different sources in, and the paper we used has a kind of ‘school exercise book’ quality to it. The image that reader-audiences are left with should be their own memory of the food they make. A photo runs the risk of fixing a moment in time. For us, although memories might also serve to fix a moment in time, the ‘Souvenir’ (as described in Chapter Seven) portions of *Recipe Book* attempts to highlight the lack of fixedness with this, as memories alter, get rewritten, misremembered, and interact with other relating memories, thus changing the meaning.



### ***A Lover's Discourse***

In the introduction to *A Lover's Discourse*, Barthes proposes that the book is 'a portrait-but not a psychological portrait; instead, a structural one which offers the reader a discursive site: the site of someone speaking within himself, *amorously*, confronting the other (the loved object), who does not speak' (2002: 3, emphasis in original). Although it is the lover 'who speaks', the lover is never able to hear back from the object of their desire; it is a love letter without a response. Much of Barthes's writing is centred around the desire to write (and of reading); *A Lover's Discourse* could be understood to be a love letter on multiple levels. We can understand it to be a love letter to being in love, of the pain of desiring the other. It can also be read as a love letter to writing and to the form that the book takes. For us, there are three distinct explorations of love that are enabled by adopting the form of *A Lover's Discourse* in our recipe book. These are: on a personal level, our love of food and sharing food together; on a theoretical level, the application and reflection on Barthes' praxis; and, combining both, our friendship as a form of critical modelling. But most significantly to this research is to do with what the form and subject matter (of Barthes' book) offers in relation to performance writing.

*Meal Project* was about exploring how food and millennial precarity connect to the production of performance writing. We have always enjoyed eating food together and making food for others has been a feature of our friendship. The intended readership of the recipe book speaks to this point: it is addressing friends (either ones we already have, ones we may one day have, or just ones we may never have or know). The sense of an unknowable friend highlights what Barthes is suggesting when he says that the object of love 'does not speak'. We draw on Luce Irigaray's proposition here, that "I love to you" is more unusual than "I love you", but respects the two

more: I love to who you are, to what you do, without reducing you to an object of my love' (Irigaray, 2002: 60). In changing the common use 'I love you' for 'I love to you', Irigaray offers a space to resist ownership of the other in the love dynamic. This interpretation of love is reflected back into the notion of a recipe book as a writerly text or as a mode of performance writing, where (even if copyright), the intention is for recipes to be shared, recreated, the outcome of which will remain unknown to the author. The recipes are put out into the world, an unknowable object, rather than the object of the author. We are not claiming ownership, mirroring the phrase 'I love to you' and mirroring the plural and open nature of friendship.

It is a central part of this research project that our recipe book enables other people to recreate the *event of sharing* food, and that the recipes are open to interpretation and to be changed, and they have been written in a style that attempts to emphasise this. This is because of the emphasis that we place on co-authored meaning-making, for example we invite reader-audiences to reflect on how they make the recipe, what they might remember about having that food before. This writing is adapted from the notes we made during the documentation process, it became apparent that the reflective notes were important, particularly the notes around feelings and reminiscence. Each recipe begins with the date of the meal as the title, followed by some keywords in relation to the event of the meal, and a short introduction that indicates either the occasion we ate the meal, or indicates the type of recipe that will follow. The specific recipe then follows this.

Whilst we have stylistically borrowed from Barthes formatting of *A Lover's Discourse*, our use of three headings (Recipes, Addendums, Souvenir) does not follow straight on from Barthes 'Figures', 'Order', 'References' (Barthes 2002: 3-9). Where in *A*

*Lover's Discourse* 'Figures' apply to the heading and associated words accompanying it and the sentence placed underneath it, we have used a date and associated words with the meal with a brief description of the meal. Barthes describes 'Figures' as the 'action' (2002: 3), whereas this does not directly translate to *The Recipe Book*. The headings, associated words, and brief description that stylistically matches Barthes' use of figures instead are used to provide context. Where 'Order' is described as 'no logic links the figures' (2002: 7) we have ordered our book in date order, and where References refer to external cultural knowledge that informs the subject (as well as personal recollection), we have referred to Souvenir only as personal recollection. Our use of recipes and addendums do not correlate to Barthes' text.

We have to some extent appropriated Barthes' format that we give and split each recipe into three parts:

1. Recipes - in the traditional understanding of the word, we have included the ingredients and the instructions for making. These follow a similar structure for each of the meals which is included. They might be considered to be readerly texts, in that they are intended to be followed (although, people are always able to change them, or mess up in carrying out the instructions).
2. Addendums (add-end-ums) - this is the section of the text where we note any changes to the recipes we have made when we prepared the meal; for example, if there was a particular food item that those present did not like we may have not included, or we may not have been able to get a particular food item or spice

or herb, or we may have wanted to make the food more or less spicy, or we may have (as is usually the case) added double or even triple the amount of garlic specified. This section also acts as an invitation and opens the recipes to interpretation. It is where others are able to note the adaptations they might make when cooking the same food; perhaps they need to change to make the recipe meaty or hallal, for example. This section indicates how recipes are not fixed instructions.

3. Souvenir - these are personal memories of moments when we have eaten the meal, not only limited to when we made the meal for the sake of this book, but also memories of other times we have eaten and prepared this food and how this has informed how we have interpreted the meals we remade for the book. This section is about the specific purpose of making and eating food and the memories that the foods trigger for us. It is meant to indicate how the experience of sharing, eating, and cooking does not sit in linear time; recipes evolve and memories become jumbled up and the food we consume take on new meanings for us personally as they become loaded with significance in relation to a particular place, person, time.



The recipes and instructions clearly explain what it takes for the dish to be made, for example:

1. Ingredients:

A large sweet potato, 1 per person  
200g tinned chickpeas, drained  
2 tablespoons sunflower oil  
2 large onions, thinly sliced  
2 teaspoons ground coriander  
2 teaspoons cumin  
1 teaspoon hot chilli powder  
½ teaspoon ground turmeric  
About a tablespoon of medium curry powder  
400g canned chopped tomatoes  
1 teaspoon soft brown sugar  
100ml water  
2 tablespoons fresh mint leaves, finely chopped  
At least 100g fresh spinach  
Salt and pepper

Method: 1. Bake the potatoes using your preferred method. 2. In a pan, cover the chickpeas with cold water, and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 45 minutes or until tender. Drain and set aside. 3. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a wok or large frying pan, add the onions and cook over a low heat for about 15 minutes, until slightly golden. Add the seasoning and stir fry for 1-2 minutes. 4. Add the tomatoes, sugar and measured water, and bring to the boil. Cover, reduce the heat and simmer gently for 15 minutes. 5. Add the chickpeas, salt and pepper and cook for 8-10 minutes, gently. Stir in the mint. Add spinach near the point of serving. 6. Serve over baked sweet potato.

This can be compared to the type of performance score we have created in other practice elements of this research project. The inclusion of our memories adds another aspect of performance score, perhaps triggering a response of imagining (the memory of making and sharing food) or connecting to readers' own memories. Following Barthes, 'because the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text' (1974: 4), we understand this as the moment when the reader potentially becomes the writer,

where the distinctions between writer and reader are blurred or erased. Although, we argue that contemporary versions of the recipe book do slip into this category.

Performing the recipe (i.e, the cooking when framed as such) might be what we do when we are alone, whereas *sharing* a meal happens when we are with others.<sup>69</sup>

The text in our recipe book accompanying the more traditional recipe section of the page tells a partial story and interrupts the recipes. Rather than this narrative following a readerly format using the hermeneutic and proairetic codes (for example, posing a question and resolving that question), the narrative is slippery, moving between voices, time periods, and locations. Different iterations of the same meal might be recalled in the same narrative account. The attempt is to shift focus away from the telling of the story, and to focus on how food is used as a narrative device to recall memories and moments of intimacy within friendship. In turn, when making the work we imagine the reader, who (it is hoped) will form their own links to the memory of food, whether through recreating the recipes or through other meals.

This practice demonstrates how, for our performance writing, value is placed on the process of writing, and how the reader-audience is implicated in the writing process: it is not reading that is important such as the reader-audience member making their own version of the text through their reading. This might be literal (recreating a recipe or making another version of the book), or in the reader forming connections between the text and their own experience. We argue that performance writing goes beyond the writerly to try to instil into its format that the reader's engagement means

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<sup>69</sup> We acknowledge not all meals are eaten with others, and there is pleasure in cooking for ourselves, and the process of transformation from recipe to meal also happens when cooking for the self. However we are specifically interested in food as a shared experience.

this process of rewriting will occur, through the production of an affective response. Whether a reader engages with a text or not is unknown, but the text is produced with the intention, or a potential, for this process to happen. Writing *Recipe Book* is a way to imagine the reader-audience.

### ***The (re)Birth of the Author(s)***

In *The Preparation of The Novel*, Barthes describes this blurring of reader and writer this way:

In order to pass from the *Pleasure of Reading* to the *Desire to Write*, it's necessary to pass through a differential of *intensities*... it's not a matter of the "Joy of Reading," a banal expression that could easily be the name of a bookshop (there must be bookshops called this) - that kind of joy produces readers who remain readers, who don't become scriptors = the productive joy of writing is a different kind of joy... (2011: 131)

There is a tension between reading for pleasure and reading that leads to writing, led by a productive force which is unspeakable. This is mirrored in performance writing, where the act of writing is transformed into the act of performing through the act of reading, our performance writing also complicates the definitions of reader and writer, or at least who is reading and who is writing shifts and changes. If scores, taking the form of recipes, are enacted, then there is the potential that this has the outcome of cooking (considering that enacting a score as recipe might not literally mean cooking). This engagement with a recipe goes beyond simply following the instructions, and for someone to truly engage with the recipes then an element of themselves is brought into it. The moments of personal reflections are intended to offer an invitation for others to reflect on their own experience. This is especially useful to know as it reveals the value of performance writing in connecting other people.

In *This Little Art* (2020), Kate Briggs describes in detail her experience of translating *The Preparation of the Novel*, noting the ways in which she was first drawn to Barthes' texts and the responsibility she felt as the re-writer of the notes:

The story I am telling about my own impulse to translate is sentimental. And difficult, I know. In the way it lays claim to a certain kind of exclusive relation: *You do realize that I love this work. As if that changes something. Because: who cares? Who else really cares?* (2020: 150)

What is significant to note is the way that the personal connection to a given text is what drives the desire for re-reading (and re-writing). As such, what Briggs discusses here is a version of the writerly, which is inherently personal, through the co-production of meaning between the reader and Barthes' five semiotic codes in a writerly text. Barthes notes that within a text what draws us in is not usually the full work. Rather, his:

desire to write doesn't come from reading as such but from certain readings in particular, local readings' and he likens finding the desire to write with falling in love: 'Like meeting someone and falling in love: what defines that Encounter? *Hope*. From meeting and falling in love with a handful of texts the *Hope of writing* is born. (Barthes, 2011: 132)

Throughout his body of writing, there is a shift in Barthes's perspective on the author; what starts off as a kind of displacement of the author in 'The Death of The Author' (1967) becomes a desire to be the author in *The Preparation of The Novel* (2011). However, one thing remains central to these two positions and that is the role of reading. As such, we might understand what seems to be a shift of position as more a reinforcement of the importance of the reader as author.

Reading and writing: they each start the other off; perhaps that's what the Force of all Creation and even of all Procreation amounts to: in the procreated child, I add myself to the person I love - Relationship between *Reading* and

*Writing*: would be nuptial - Rapprochement between Creation and Procreation: it's been done countless time, but it's inevitable. (Barthes, 2011: 133)

Our writing is borne of the experiments we conduct, in this case the food that we cooked. The writing follows the action, and we understand it as being a way of documenting the process – but beyond this, we argue the writing is also the performance itself. Barthes expresses this in the quotation above by positioning writing and reading as being interconnected and inseparable from each other. This too, for us, is the case here for the meals we have made and the recipes as performance writing. There is a sense of 'copying' or 'imitation'. Similarly, we think through our own desire to write, both in the style of Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*, and in connection to other artists' work. We do so in order to gain a deeper understanding of the reason why others may choose to re-author, this is particularly important because in connection to the potentiality of performance writing, and the question of why might others choose to engage with the work?

Barthes makes two distinctions between the types of desire associated with the pleasure of reading. The first, *Volupia*, refers to a 'fully satisfied Desire' and *Pothos* refers to 'poignant desire for the absent thing' (2011: 132). Thinking back to *Desires for Labour* (see chapters four and five) we categorise this kind of desire as relating to a desire for the 'absent thing', the absent thing being decent and fair working conditions. These distinctions have clear parallels with distinctions between the readerly and writerly, as the former form of writing is satisfied in and of itself and the latter forces one to act on it in a deeper way. Barthes notes that there are three forms of pleasure in relation to reading and writing:

1. Pleasure satisfied by reading, in that it isn't tormented by the desire to do likewise: *Volupia*.
2. Pleasure of reading that's tormented by a lack: desire to write: *Pothos*.
3. Pleasure of writing is clearly not without its anxieties (difficulties, frequent pitfalls), but it's an anxiety of Producing, not an Anxiety of being - *an* anxiety, not anxiety. Not *Volupia* but on the side of *Volupia*. (Barthes, 2011: 132)

These terms resonate with Luce Irigaray's formulation of 'I love to you'; *Volupia* points towards the object of love, and *Pothos*, in relation to lack, points towards the ownership of the statement 'I love you', seeking satisfaction through the object that cannot be fulfilled by the other.

On imitation, Barthes notes:

Clearly, the passage from reading to writing, following in the wake of desire, can only be achieved through the mediation of a practice of *Imitation*. But no sooner has the word been said out loud than it has to be abandoned: because, in the passage from reading to writing, what takes place is an Imitation so particular, so rebellious, so distortive that a different word is needed to identify the relation between the book read (the book desired) and the book to be written. (Barthes, 2011: 133)

While our use of *A Lover's Discourse* is a form of imitation, as Barthes points out, this becomes something else. We desire Barthes' text but reading the text for us is not a satisfactory outcome of this desire, so we were led to create our own version of this in order to force this desire. Recreating the recipes is not strictly the same as this, as a recipe is designed to be made, and cooking is not rewriting. It is reading, not cooking, that is important here, and the use of motifs influenced by Barthes in *Recipe Book* seeks to create a text that will instil desire in the reader.

### ***Co-authorship and Millennial Experience***

We are the authors of the recipes, and the detail we offer within these recipes points to us being the authors. We reflect on personal moments and encounters which has been a characteristic of other practice-research performance writing in this thesis as most of the research has been undertaken through an autoethnographic approach. The importance of food is not specific to the millennial experience (it is significant across the board) but, it is the case that food has a particular cultural value here. We have discussed together the bad meals we would eat when we were growing up, often mass produced, readymade, frozen and 'quick' to prepare (both sets of our parents worked full time). As we grew up we can both remember our parents 'discovering' pasta bake and that this felt like a 'fancy' food for a while, and the moments that we realised we were able to make the food that we wanted for ourselves. Our changing food tastes grew and developed as we grew and developed. We are both vegetarians, and recall having to cover meaty food with lots of ketchup or vegetables to 'get it down'. Food is connected to a sense of home and belonging, and as we have written elsewhere housing precarity can inhibit those senses, but food can offer one way to form those connections.

The notes we kept have a diary-like quality to them; the style in which we kept our notes are specific to us as individuals. What we offer in the recipes that we share are translations of these notes and our diaries to reflect a joint experience of the events that took place – even when these meals took place separate from one another. For example:

1. **From the Pizza Party (Meal One):**

With there being so many people in a fairly small flat, although the kitchen was much bigger than mine it was still difficult to navigate the pizza making experience and I think that K was really a bit stressed about it all. It was nice

for me to meet people and chat with others, everyone was also drinking - I had red wine. After we had eaten the pizzas we all went to the pub, and I think K was fairly relieved by the time it was time to go.

2. Mushrooms on Toast (Meal Four):

In the end it was our last meal that we were able to have in person together for a long time, I think the next time we ate in person would have been C's birthday in August, when we were able to sit in the garden to eat. We had this alongside some avocado and some spicy tinned beans with spinach mixed in. I only recently began enjoying mushrooms as a main feature. I began eating a vegan diet in January and I think that is when I started enjoying mushrooms more. I remember, early on in the year, going for breakfast with some friends to a vegan cafe and ordering garlic mushrooms, and I felt really satisfied.

3. Isolation Meal (Meal Seven):

The novelty of cooking over facetime began to wear off with this meal. I missed eating together. This meal tasted really odd. I got this cheap olive oil and it was blended with something but the writing was in a language I can't read so I'm not sure what's in it, but it has a strange pungent flavour that dominates the cooking. I also accidentally put too much balsamic in, and the tapenade did not go with the weird olive oil. I've made this before, normally the day after pizzas, to use up leftover pizza sauce, and it's never gone so wrong before. H tried some and said it was nice.

As noted above, we call these anecdotes 'souvenirs'. The souvenirs are similar in style to the reflections and notes offered in *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* (1954), which have the same diary-like quality. Reading this book feels somewhere between reading autobiography, fiction and a recipe or cookbook. The way that the food is used to tell stories is like how we have approached the writing of our recipes. An example of Toklas's text reads as follows, 'Godiva had been taking us successfully to places in the neighbourhood of Paris. It was time to give her a wider field. In early spring she would take us to the Cote d'Azur' (Toklas, 1984: 78). These snippets of narrative text are placed in between the text of the recipes, transporting the reader to various places and times through stories that coincide with the food eaten.



The contemporary artist Holly White's *Recipes For You: A vegan and gluten free recipe and story book with additional life skills* published (2016) is methodologically similar to our recipe book, in part is due to shared themes of precarity, low waged insecure jobs, working in hospitality, and shared accommodation. Where our book follows the date order from which the meals were made, White's is split into specific types of recipes these include; 'food at work, carbs with carbs, things you can't eat, snacks, foods as gifts' etc. We found that a lot of the content was relatable to us, especially when she writes about comfort foods, making food which is bad for you and the food which she must eat at work (where she is unable to leave to get access to other food sources). The author was born in 1985 and so is around the same age as us, and it seems likely that she has experienced working and living precarity due to the descriptions in the diary-like passages. These passages include descriptions of eating at work, the journey to and from work, and the descriptions of the labour she performs. Reading through the recipes and accompanying narrative allowed us to make connections with the artist without actually having met her, which we understand as a characteristic of performance writing. A lot of the food described in the book does not seem particularly appealing (in that it does not follow the form of aspirational cooking) or complex to make. Recipes include 'Potato Waffle Starter for A Dinner Party', 'Tomato Pasta Bake' and a 'Vegan Samosa' which is purchased from the local corner shop. What the book does offer is a way to tell stories through food, we get a sense of the kind of person the book is written for, we get the impression that these recipes are for people 'like her', and as such the same is true for our own recipes. She comments that, '3. [y]ou asked me on OKCUPID why I was vegetarian and not vegan. I tried to explain but it was difficult, I said I used to be vegan, I wanted to be – and that I could not justify not being. I remember thinking

your response was very thoughtful' (2016: 48). A difference with our own writing is that we are not speaking to a specific person, though we are an audience for each other, and the recipes and stories and reflections have been a way for us to communicate with each other – especially where one might have been upset with the other or frustrated about a particular moment or meal.

Our souvenirs function slightly differently as they specifically relate to the experience of eating the meal (although there are other moments of reflection). They do not guide the narrative of *Recipe Book* in the same way – they are the result of the recipe, almost a postscript. *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* is an important text to highlight in relation to our own, not least because of the relationship between Gertrude Stein, Alice B. Toklas and their social circle but also because of the myth surrounding them. *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* (1933) is actually by Gertrude Stein and is much more her own autobiography, and *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* offers a counterpoint, acting as Toklas's own version of her autobiography. The playfulness with which Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas approach authorship (or ideas around authenticity of authorship) resonates with us as co-authors who are concerned with producing collaborative writerly texts and do not lay individual claim to any particular part of our own writing. Both ours and Stein / Toklas' recipe books tell a story of how lives are lived, that are evidently different but they both use food to allow access to the kind of people that they wish to reach. One way they both address this is through the use of names that makes the text feel familiar. For example, Toklas writes, 'Nora's Ice Cream, Alice's Cookies' they also use comedy with these names, 'nameless cookies' (1984: 98-99). We employ a

similar tactic in our own writing although we often redact the names of the individuals and instead offer their initial, for example:

H tried some and said it was nice

I think the next time we ate together would have been C's birthday in August.

K was really a bit stressed about it all.

Using the initial rather than the full name was intended as a similar level of friendliness, but allows an openness where the blanks may be filled in with the names of those who are known by the reader of the text.

We use craft to generate objects which we have previously discussed as an assemblage. The recipes are performed through the act of assembly. Whilst a recipe book itself might not seem to be an assemblage in that it is not an 'ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts' (Bennet, 2010: 23), it becomes an assemblage when it is used, as the recipes become a grouping with ingredients, with the order the ingredients are put together, with the person putting the meal together. We are attempting to emphasise the aspect of cooking that is made up of parts. This goes beyond a recipe, or a particular meal, or the moment of cooking. Food is collaboratively produced, from how we acquire food and ingredients, to how we 'do' cooking; knowledge that is handed down culturally and orally (and, there are materials available to aid with cooking if this information isn't handed down, from TV shows to books to YouTube channels, although these may not be accessible resources for everyone). Cooking is also a collaboration with a past self. During the year of sharing food, we found ourselves drawing on the memory of other occasions

where we had cooked the same ingredients. We also have particular meals we associate with each other and repeat often.

This year of eating together was not the beginning or the end of our shared relationship with food (we probably had many more meals together when we lived together than we did in 2020) but framing this time as generative of performance writing brought our attention to details we might otherwise have overlooked. The aspect of memory became a significant detail, and this revealed to us a further collaboration within cooking – that different meals and different occasions become intertwined, that cannot be separated from one another. We can measure years of our lives by what we were eating, in the same way that we can measure time by fashion, but beyond that, the food we shared sits sort of outside time: we know we have finessed meals to our taste through repeatedly cooking it and altering it, but we cannot pinpoint when this happened. Using craft in the construction of the book attempts to emphasise the ‘bittiness’ of the relationship between food and memory. There is a texture to the recipe book that brings attention to its construction and its constituent parts much as a meal is made of parts. The writing, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is divided into sections that in part emphasises how the meal may be altered and in part reflects on the memory and the confusion of memories associated with this food. This movement does not stop with the recipe book, which instead acts as a marker or moment in time; the meals will continue to exist and evolve beyond the recipe book, even if we, as the authors, are the only ones to use it.

## **Conclusion**

To describe *Recipe Book* as performance writing that utilises a definition of DIY artwork that revolves around potential participation, signifies the importance we place on fostering the reimagination of the future. Just as the history of zines and banners are connected to underground and alternative movements against the mainstream or are used as tools to try and enact change, DIY artworks attempt to produce utopian social transformation through the relationship between object and participant. In previous chapters, we have framed our work as hauntological, and we continue to do so here; we are not working with the concept of a utopia but rather how these works enable *acts of imagining* alternative futures as opposed to *acts of transformation*. However, the role of imagination in this is important as is hauntology, as it highlights a shared crisis that needs to be overcome before social change can take place. Whilst we may approach this from a different angle to the Fluxus artists who Dezeuze<sup>70</sup> writes about, our common interest is in thinking about the *potential* to produce different futures:

the idea that individuals need to be encouraged to discover their own potential - for freedom, creativity, self-determination - and to imagine alternative modes of living and engaging with others outside current power structures, as well as the notion that individual experience can constitute the starting point for collective actions. (Dezeuze, 2010: 224)

The ghost-like qualities of *Recipe Book* are both from the past (the memories in the Souvenirs section) and how this projects to the future; the potential for recipes to lead to cooking in the future, but also that the component parts are designed to make the reader consider the future. It is hoped that though thinking of past meals shared,

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<sup>70</sup> Dezeuze refers to art works of the 1960s that sought to bring about social change and applying a non-traditional definition of DIY to this as discussed earlier in this chapter. (See Dezeuze, 2010)

there might be some reflection on future meals that might be shared. In writing the recipes and constructing the book, we were part of this reflective process, imagining ourselves and others sharing these meals again. This will not bring about utopian transformation, but it can bring about an imagining of being with others and of sharing. We equate these ideas of sharing, being together and friendship as acts of (self) care that may go towards protecting against precarity, and as such, as hopeful acts of reimagining the future.

Recipes (and memory and sharing) are the way we have attempted to do this (because of the connection we've made between this and the millennial themes of this thesis). The form of the recipe as a thing of parts to be put together, to be assembled, relates back to our reflections in Chapter Six about hauntology and the maps that we made – a recipe could be thought of in a similar way to a map, something to be followed, something to be constructed, but never fully completed. There is always an action that is required to follow the line (of the map, of the instructions of the recipe). This tells us what performance writing can do for experiences of precarity – as unfixed, uncertain, not whole – the possibilities of which are hopeful, that you will make a nice meal that you enjoy, derive pleasure from – or that you will create a life that can offer the same.

The use of both Barthes' form in *A Lover's Discourse* (1977) and the form of the recipe is about a desire to re-write and a desire to be read, re-read and be rewritten. This also acts as a form of hope, that others will re-make the recipes, add their own twists to the lists of ingredients: create their own DIY performance. There is hope in wanting to reach out to others. There is hope in using time in a way we find pleasurable – in pleasure as resistance.

The performance writing practice we have discussed in this chapter brings together the nature of the art object and the nature of the text to create a form that uses theoretical approaches that attempt to engage audience rewriting and acts of imagination. We have linked the manner it is made (retaining this handmade quality) and what it does (gives instructions as to how the reader may make their own food). Through the narrative quality of the text as writerly, as incomplete, it suggests ways the reader may form affective connections with the text, with the intention that this writerly theory is enacted in practice; where encountering the text enables a process of rewriting through forming links between food, memory and friendship. Our performance writing is what connects the concept and the form, in that it is doing both (it attempts to be a writerly text and is DIY). This connection is the central finding to the recipe book practice. Recipes lend themselves to this because of their already inherently instructional nature, their cultural familiarity, a recipe's ability to be manipulated, and how food holds personal relationships with memory.

As the final chapter of the thesis, the work done here is concerned with synthesising the aims and questions of the overall research project. *Recipe Book* brings together all of the characteristics of performance writing that we have identified, which serves to further demonstrate the slipperiness between the subfields we locate this research in, whereby these characteristics are shared between these subfields.

This project uses a generative method that uses devising strategies framed as performance experiments to both reflect on an aspect of our experience to develop writing. In this instance, this is analysed as a series of meals in Chapter Seven. This aspect of process is combined with the process of physically making objects, which we describe in this chapter as physically making *Recipe Book*. As such, performance

writing takes on temporal qualities in terms of the time spent as a demarcated act (sharing meals) and the time spent making objects. This builds from the discussion of time and the political potential of slow pleasure in relation to the experience of precarity as discussed in Chapter Four.

The method used in developing *Recipe Book* is the culmination of our autoethnographic collaborative approach. Whilst we have used this approach throughout, it is here that we try to explicitly consider friendship within this. Whilst other chapters do consider friendship, this is as a result of analysis of our experience and how the performance writing responds to this; here we use food to consider friendship as the subject. In highlighting this, the chapter brings attention to the ways in which we use autoethnography, friendship as method and collaboration throughout this thesis in combination, to consider new ways of working autoethnographically.

Whilst sharing meals is not in itself a millennial experience, the ways we draw on the memory of sharing food makes reference to the experience of millennial precarity, and the use of these meals is drawn from that. To illustrate; when we refer the memory of eating in house shares, we are referring to forms of intimacy brought about by circumstance (precarious housing) that we would not have enjoyed were it not for the circumstances rooted in our social, cultural and economic experience. (We likely still would have enjoyed sharing meals, but they would be rooted in different experiences). The decision to share food in this way is also described as a way to bring familiarity into new housing situations; through inviting a friend over and making somewhere unhomey feel more like home through friendship. As such, *Recipe Book* draws on the experiences described in analysis of *House Box*. Food,



and hosting, also aided us in reflecting back on our paid employment as precarious hospitality workers, drawing on experiences described in analysis of *Desires for Labour*. The use of memory, and the recipe as a haunted site of past, present and projected future, draws on the experiences described in the analysis of *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are*. This process, of bringing together all these elements, helps us understand the use value of performance writing as holding qualities that can interrogate specific social cultural and economic positions, through taking an autoethnographic approach to creating performance writing. We suggest here that this was furthered by working collaboratively, because it requires a consideration of the self as subject in relation to others.

We analyse *Recipe Book* through theories of reading, writing (and translating) developed by Barthes and Briggs. The chapter solidifies the use value of performance writing, by drawing this back to questions about authorship and the relationship between reading and writing, offering further applications for literary theory within performance. We discuss the relationship between recipes and scores as writerly practices. The chapter also addresses the question of developing performance writing that might be useful for other artists, we discuss the work of other practitioners that are writing about Barthes and use experimental writing strategies in their work also that might benefit or find useful the work that we have done. We analyse hope and friendship in explicit ways through imagining hopeful ways of being in the world through moments of connection, in this case by sharing food together.

## Conclusion

This thesis investigates how our practice of performance writing offers a way to develop strategies to both illustrate and understand millennial experiences of precarity autoethnographically. It focuses on how these strategies might offer ways of dealing with this precarity, as a method of imagining the future. This aspect of 'imagining' is in response to a hauntological impasse that has characterised millennial experience. As such, we identify our performance writing as responding to hauntology, and we draw on literary theory to discuss how meaning-making is formed through the interplay of art, writing, the hauntological, the object-ness of our performance writing and the process of making. This thesis does not analyse the work from the perspective of audience reception, and instead is concerned with the experience of *making* work that takes the audience's reception into account. As such, the strategies discussed are contextualised as strategies of making, including when we refer to reader theory (drawing on Barthes). New insights are developed through reconfiguring existing strands of knowledge and theory and bringing these together in our performance writing to address a gap within the field. Our contribution offers a firmer idea of what performance writing is and what it can do than previously existed. We offer a specific and expanded understanding of performance writing and how it can be used within specific frameworks. The framework we use here is our experience of precarity, but it can be applied by artists for other purposes, drawing on an autoethnographic methodology as a generating process.

Experiencing precarity means that fundamental aspects of what is required to experience what Lauren Berlant calls 'a good life' (including secure working contracts, renters' rights, access to leisure time) are not being met. This leads to a

feeling of 'living on the edge' (Ahmed 2017), which in turn prevents us from being able to imagine alternatives to this reality. We have addressed this through a range of performance writing approaches and outcomes including: a hand bound and hand typeset recipe book; a box containing score cards, a map, an instructional zine with a QR code that links to an audio tour of Chapel Street on it; a box containing score cards, maps, instructions, an MP3 player with an audio tour to our shared house on it; a trilogy comprised of zines, scorecards, and a knitted banner. These objects address precarity and the imagination as performance writing by connecting moments of nostalgia and memory within the work, and making performance writing that is reflective of this. For example, *House Box* draws on our memory of house-sharing and renting, *Desires for Labour* draws on our experience of employment, *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* recalls our unreliable memory of being on Chapel Street and *Recipe Book* recalls a series of shared meals. Each of these works takes interconnecting experiences we identify as precarious (housing, employment, the city, and food relating to housing, friendship, memory) and engages the imagination through the process of making, so that a sense of certainty about the future shifts and is undermined. The projection of the future is predicated on a hauntological notion of 'no more future', which is to mean we cannot imagine the future, and the process of making performance writing became a hopeful strategy in response to this feeling.

Due to the collaborative nature of this research project, this thesis offers insights into co-authored meaning-making in the performing and contemporary arts. These insights are:

1. Offering a definition of performance writing that emphasises embodied experience and affect in its production, whereby we understand performance writing as both a product and a process. We analyse devising processes as part of this practice, discussed in Chapters Three, Four, Five, Seven and Nine.
2. We understand performance writing to incorporate objects. Whilst not all performance writing will include objects, our practice does, and making these objects is central to the process of producing performance writing. This is discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Nine. We establish the importance of objects within performance writing as it relates to the experience of millennial precarity, and how these objects function as performance writing. We consider these objects as precarious through their materiality even when their materiality suggests permanence, and through the making method, connecting making specifically to the process of labour as a way of understanding our experience of (for example) precarious employment. We discuss this in Chapters Four and Five. Making performance writing (through both devising and making textual objects) is considered an element of the performance writing, rather than a process leading to performance writing.
3. We apply literary theory, specifically Barthes' theories of readerly and writerly texts to our analysis of performance writing. This supports us in establishing an extended definition of performance writing. We demonstrate this in Chapters Two and Nine.

Insights are in part derived through the experience of producing this work collaboratively, but 'collaboration' also refers to how our approach – whilst often

looking inward and reflecting on our own experiences and emotions towards precarity – also attempts to look outwards to consider imagined readers as we produce the performance writing. We demonstrate through *Recipe Book* how the concept of the writerly as a method of meaning-making produced through both writing and reading is written into the structure of our performance writing. We apply the following techniques to achieve this: we aesthetically mimic Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse* (2002) to organise each recipe into sections that consider different aspects of recipes and food. The sections include a recipe as straight forward instruction, a recipe as a text that is open to change, and a recipe as an unstable site of meaning as it is reproduced through different encounters, with different people, in different scenarios, drawing on the unreliable memory of sharing food and imagining sharing food with others. We consider the ways that meaning here is both readerly and straightforward, and writerly and semiotically disruptive. Other works discussed in this thesis also employ aspects of memory and varieties of instructional and score writing for the same purpose. We acknowledge that whilst the work may never be read or activated through its reading, that making work incorporated imagining audiences in a way that helped us as the makers feel less atomised, described as a strategy for connecting with others.

This thesis asserts the value of performance writing for those who experience millennial precarity. We identified in the literature review at the beginning of this thesis a gap in the field, whereby generational experiences of precarity have been explored through performance illustratively, or as offering social practice strategies for dealing with precarity. Performance writing offers value as a method of making in response to precarity. This is in part by utilising precarity as a mode of making (i.e.,

using the parameters of precarity as a methodological approach). This includes using the means available, such as using resources we have available and skills we have already acquired and approaching making work as a DIY activity (see Chapters Four, Five and Nine). This is in part due to financial and time-based restrictions. We also use precarity as a devising process, drawing on the parameters of our quotidian experience to generate material and text, for example noting when we clock in and out of work as a devising strategy in Chapter Four, approaching housing through a case study of a house share and producing work in that house as in Chapters One and Three, and considering the hauntological within Chapel Street through a process of re-walking Chapel Street as a generative process, as in Chapter Six. Performance writing has offered us (as artists and in writing this thesis) ways of understanding our experience of precarity. The characteristics of performance writing as defined in Chapter Two have allowed this: the devising process takes an aspect of our quotidian experience and demarcates this as an activity separate from our daily life, reframing an activity as an experiment or process for the purpose of generating text or understanding an aspect of precarity. For example, we clock in and out of work as part of daily life, but an attempt was made to pay attention to when we do this (rather than as just something we do anyway), as well as to notice other ways our time might be regarded as 'clocked in' or 'clocked out' and why (such as, taking an unofficial five minute break, which we might not ordinarily pay attention to). We translate this embodied experience into writing, and both are brought together through performance writing, incorporating written text, aural text, walking and mapping as text, and objects (as product and making objects) as text. We are in effect the writers and the readers at the same time, returning to the work we have made and analysing it in the written component of this thesis. As such, the

approaches we have used may be of value to others who share our generational experiences and may want to utilise creative strategies as a response to this or to decode and understand this. The application of this could be for those with an interest in the arts, or could be used within education or community workshop settings to support students in developing their own strategies for making performance work.

This is achieved in the following ways. This thesis adds to previous understandings and framings of performance writing through drawing on a combination of embodied experience and literary theory in making performance writing, through a consideration of how and why objects can be performance writing and through exploring performance writing through a specific framework (i.e., precarity), which indicates ways that performance writing might be applied to understand experience through other experiential frameworks.

The key strategies used in this thesis (that were developed through our performance writing practice) that allowed us to develop new insights are listed below. We will analyse how these offer us new insights in this conclusion:

1. A co-authored approach.
2. Developing an expanded definition of performance writing as a reflexive process whereby an experimentation stage is turned into a performance writing object. The performance writing itself includes:
  - a. Walking (such as a *dérive* or, antithetically, instructions for walking).

- b. Mapping.
  - c. Cut and paste or collage techniques.
  - d. Zines.
  - e. Audio.
  - f. Score cards.
  - g. Craft such as knitting, sewing, bookbinding.
3. Analysis of making the performance writing, including the experimentation stage and the methods of production (of the objects and text).
  4. Analysis of the objects made, and how the objects function as actants.
  5. Drawing on existing theoretical concepts; significantly, Mark Fishers interpretation of Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology (*Specters of Marx*, 2006); Hannah Arendt and the realms of work, labour and action (*The Human Condition*, 1998); Roland Barthes' theory of the readerly and writerly (*S/Z*, 1990); Deleuze and Guatari's definition of assemblages (*A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 2004) and also related to this, Bergson and duration (*Creative Evolution*, 1911); the concept of the arrivant as further developed by Sara Ahmed (*Queer Phenomonology*, 2006); Sara Jane Bailes and objects as actants (*Out of the Ordinary: objects, agency and performance*, 2017). Whilst theatre and performance as fields have been discussed in relation to hauntology (see Whalley & Miller (2016), Powell & Shaffer (2009), the connections we make here between a practice of performance writing and hauntology has not been previously articulated.

### **Key Outcomes**

The first aim of this thesis was:



- 1) To develop a method of performance writing that situates and interrogates our experience of millennial precarity.

As demonstrated in the literature review, live performance and theatre have interrogated and depicted the experience of millennial precarity, and there is a range of social practices within live and visual arts that have sought out strategies for responding to millennial precarity. However, performance writing has not been utilised in this way. We have discussed in this thesis how we were able to use experimentation and develop this into performance writing, and how this helped us understand our experience of precarity. Chapter One frames the parameters of what we are referring to as 'millennial'. Our experience is one of privilege, with access to education, resources and social capital; but it is still a position of anxiety. This informs our approach to performance writing whereby we attempt to use the parameters of our experience of precarity as a structural framework in our devising and writing.

The second aim of this thesis was:

- 2) To define the use value of performance writing within this interrogation.

This is primarily addressed through our expanded definition of performance writing, influenced by a range of practices and artists (see Chapter Two), that allows us to take a multi-modal approach that adapts to circumstances and topics. This approach can be applied beyond 'millennial precarity' as an area of enquiry. Our use of performance writing has an emphasis on experimentation that draws specifically on the autoethnographic and as such if these strategies are applied by others, then their

own experience will inform the work made. As such, performance writing allowed us to focus on the experience of generational precarity as it was experienced *for us*.

The notion that 'the future is dead' is characterised by not recognising the future we are heading towards, and an inability to imagine an alternative. Strategies that seek out ways to use the imagination offer hope; not as escapism but as imagining ways we can connect to others, welcome and host others. This is a trajectory that might lead to (re)imagining the future.

*Recipe Book* highlights insights that have come to the fore about the use value of performance writing. Specifically, this work emphasises an imagined reader (of the recipes) through drawing on the memory of meals shared and suggesting how future iterations of meals will result in new or altered memories of the meals. Firstly, this has come through the way that we have used Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse*. Other artists have created work which draw upon the themes of *A Lover's Discourse* (such as the connection to love, and love letters) whereas we have borrowed from the form with the intention to produce a writerly text. This imitation of the form allowed us to draw connections between Barthes and performance writing and here his own ideas around style are brought into this conversation. This allowed us to make explicit the link between the concept of the writerly with the form of DIY art objects in our performance writing practice.

In Chapter Four, we discuss craftivism as a form of protest which uses the protesters' existing craft-based skills to make small objects to leave in public space. This approach is similar to zine making, another DIY art approach, which may take different forms and levels of complexity depending on the maker's skills, time and

access to materials. A zine can be as simple as a folded piece of paper with writing, drawing or collage on it; it can be distributed as it is or can be easily photocopied to produce multiple copies. In the same chapter, we also discussed the relationship between pleasure and slow time as ways of resisting (or of counterbalancing) the effects of encroaching capitalism on our daily lives, particularly in relation to labour. *Recipe Book* continues in this vein: the potential for enjoying the time spent on the craft activity in making a DIY artwork is central to why we take this approach. There is a slow rhythm to using a zine-like approach to putting a recipe book together – of cutting out bits of text and Pritt-sticking them to the master copy, of binding photocopied pages together, waiting for glue to dry. The activity of making this work is carried through from the first discussions about what we want to do, through the year of making meals together, and then in the execution of making the book. In Chapter Four, we discussed the Fordist production line in relation to Hannah Arendt's realms of labour and work, and our own experience of employment. Our use of craft is for us a kind of anti-production line production line. On a small scale, objects are made up in sections as processes must be conducted in a specific order for the object to be made. When we made *Recipe Book*, we made each book at the same time, completing each step of physically making the book before moving on to the next step, so that a room was taken over with part made books. As these production lines were craft based, and we had autonomy over what we made and how we made it, the process was a slow reflective one as opposed to a Fordist one with no room for individual worker creativity.

Each stage of producing performance writing in this model – utilising a multi-mode approach that incorporates reflective devising processes and then craft processes to

make objects – encourages slowness and reflection. This is even when in a rush to get something completed; making an object by hand such as the knitted banner can only be sped up as much as the body will allow. Making the textual objects is part of the performance writing itself, not a separate component. As such, we describe performance writing as a resistant practice, drawing here on Berardi's ideas around slowness and pleasure being resistant strategies against capitalism and growth. We consider this within the context of millennial precarity as a millennial valuing of this mode of production (that may or may not be shared with someone approaching performance writing from a different background). For example, we explore pleasure as resistance through the pleasure of making and the slow time of craft as referred to with the knitted banner.

Secondly, the materiality of the objects, the DIY processes we use to make them, and the social nature of the pooling of resources is another way we derive pleasure: the collaborative nature of the work goes beyond ourselves and has required us to draw on help from others. For example, when making the zines and cards for *Desires for Labour* we drew on friends to help us. We have drawn on friends to help us document the work (through the use of their cameras), and we have drawn on friends who have taught us skills – for example the process of bookbinding was taught to us by an ex-housemate when we were living together in South Manchester. These skills were then used in the production of *Recipe Book*. And it was other people that we lived with that allowed in many ways for us to create *House Box*. Early ideas, experiments and research were able to flourish due to the people that we were living with at the time, and in fairly subtle ways, sharing that house with them shaped aspects of this research project. This points to how both the

experimentation and performance writing objects are collaborative endeavours that look outwards to others, our relationships, and how we care for one another, even in the most insular autoethnographic moments. Our work is informed by our relationships with others, and how we care for those relationships.

A further use of performance writing again comes from our expanded definition of the term. By including objects as performance writing, and analysing the materiality of the performance writing through its object-ness, we are able to discuss the role of the object as it relates to us as artists, as it relates to us as millennials and as it relates to our experience of precarity. We do this through drawing on ideas around objects as having agency, as actants. We consider objects as being important to us in relation to hoarding and wrote about the ways we have tried to seek security through holding on to objects whilst renting. It might explain why making tangible actant-objects that house writing are important to this practice.

The third aim of this thesis was:

- 3) To analyse hope and friendship in millennial precarity.

The notion of hospitality has been central to how we 'resolve' our experiences, offering us the means to imagine a hopeful future, as demonstrated through *Recipe Book*, above. We have analysed hospitality as an approach that places emphasis on expressing identity through a mutual process of making space for one another. This is a shared characteristic with friendship. Friendship is used as a strategy within the work and at times the subject of the research. Friendship is a way to practise being in the political world (action) drawing on Hannah Arendt's articulations, and we also

feed friendship into the other realms of the human condition; work and labour - we have demonstrated this through art making (work) and other forms of labour we have to engage with to survive (labour).

The notion of hospitality has also helped us understand our political position within this work. We occupy two positions in relation to 'hospitality'. On the one hand, we are informed by our experiences as workers in the hospitality industry within a capitalist model. We reflect on this in relation to millennial precarity. On the other hand, we are informed by Derrida's writings on hospitality as welcoming the stranger: where 'unlimited hospitality' (2000: 77) can never quite be achieved because too much of the self (and of the home) would have to be given up to the stranger. Instead, hospitality is about being a host, developing relationships with the unknown other, offering up space for respite. A co-authored approach has involved applying the concept of hospitality to each other. *Recipe Book* sees the line of our use of hospitality from being an aspect to our labour precarity to something that might offer us a way out of precarity – to imagine the other, to find hope in this, to imagine the future through applying ideas around hosting one another. To be a host means not just giving up something of yourself or yours to the stranger, it also means making space for the potential that you become altered by the stranger. In Chapter Seven we discuss more explicitly the connections between friendship and hospitality using food as a means to do this, discussing food sharing as a collaborative research strategy that considers how we make decisions and negotiate and collaboratively problem solve, how we make room for one another, how we express care for one another, how we incorporate others into the collaborative relationship. Using food in this way brings to the fore how for us making performance writing (which, as

discussed above is part of the performance writing itself and not a process we consider separate from or leading to performance writing) is tied up with the notion of friendship, whether in a literal sense of us as co-authors and friends, or through a consideration of imagined reader-audiences or through drawing on the experience of friendship within our experience of millennial precarity.

We created a practice of performance writing that comprises text, the process of making, and the materiality of the performance writing (its object-ness) which is a new insight into performance writing. As discussed earlier in this conclusion, our definition of performance writing extends how performance writing was previously understood, to include making as process as part of the performance writing itself. We have demonstrated how we have used this to refer to and understand our own specific cultural, social and economic position and have suggested the potential for this to be used autoethnographically by others to extend beyond our own positioning.

We have made a limited number of objects and so these objects, to be played with by more than one person, need to be shared. Currently, there is one copy of *House Box*, one banner for *Desires for Labour*, a handful of cards and zines for *Desires for Labour* (originally there were 26 sets plus some spares, but as these have been given away we have a few left), and five copies of *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are*. There are six copies of *Recipe Book*. These vary in quality as they are hand made and when looked at collectively they show the developing skills. They share characteristics and have been made with the intention that they look the same, yet they are each individual books that reflect their handmade and as such unique nature. *House Box* and *Chapel Street or Wherever You Are* are both containers with

items in, which can be lost, removed, altered, marked, dirtied, and so the next person to receive the object (should it be shared) will be receiving a different object. Similarly, the recipe books may be marked (and it invites being marked, there is a 'notes' page and blank spaces that may be utilised for notes). A recipe book often becomes marked even when unintentional - we both have recipe books that have splashes and stains on them from the food we have cooked. Similarly, if someone does not want to engage with the artwork, then, whilst it does not alter the object, it alters the relationship between reader and object. However, approaching work with the *intention* to be writerly has tested and expanded understandings of performance writing, through considering how making work is also a writerly process whereby multiple meanings are established.

### ***Answering the Research Questions***

This written thesis and its practice component were produced in order to answer the following:

- 1) How might performance writing strategies interrogate a specific cultural, social and economic position?

We take an autoethnographic approach that positions us as both researchers and subjects. We use this in order to analyse the specific cultural, social and economic position that we occupy as millennials, which we describe as 'millennial precarity'. We have adapted the ethnographic approach of friendship as method elucidated by Tillmann-Healy (2003; see introduction to thesis). Rather than using this approach to form deeper connections with subjects of our study, we have used our friendship as a collaborative approach to reflect on and analyse our own experiences. We have



furthered our own understanding of our position as millennials through contextual research including examining a range of millennial responses to precarity (discussed in the literature review) as well as through framing performance writing as a millennial practice, through the ways it relates to millennial experiences of precarity. This incorporates aesthetic aspects including assemblages and a DIY approach (something we are characterising as 'millennial aesthetics'), that utilise the circumstances of precarity (such as insecurity, unfixedness and financial and practical limitations) to make performance writing. It considers the value of a practice of performance writing that incorporates objects (or rather, a practice of performance writing that is object based). It is achieved by considering processes of making performance writing (including devising and construction) as part of the performance writing itself and not separate to its, and as such the strategies that form these processes draw on our autoethnographic experiences.

2) How does our autoethnographic process develop performance writing, and in what ways may this be useful for other artists?

By developing a definition of performance writing that incorporates both process and product, we were able to use the circumstances of our position of millennial precarity as a means with which to devise and physically produce performance writing. We conclude here that as much as autoethnographic processes develop performance writing, performance writing itself offers strategies for examining specific autoethnographic contexts, through taking this approach. This might be useful for other artists as a model of how to approach work (through potential devising and making strategies), as an expanded definition of performance writing that artists may want to incorporate into their own work. In the introduction, we reference an

understanding of collaboration that refers to socially engaged art, whereby collaboration might involve an artist working with a group or community to produce an affect or change in that community; or collaboration to refer to a group of differently skilled people coming together to pool expertise for a shared goal or product. Here, by combining collaboration with autoethnography, we demonstrate how such an approach enables us to use collaboration to look at our own social, cultural and economic position, through our relationship with each other; whereby our collaboration itself becomes a subject in the research. As such, we offer collaboration as a development of autoethnography that might be useful for other artists and researchers interested in working in this way. This new methodological approach is a key finding of this thesis.

### ***Contribution to Existing Research and Scholarship***

There is a blurriness between performance writing as a mode of art and art making, and as a strategy for conducting research. As a PaR project, our method of making performance writing *is* the autoethnographic collaborative methodology of the research. The use of friendship within this collaboration furthers this blurriness. We describe performance writing as a demarcated act, even when using the quotidian within this. We achieve this through framing (e.g., paying attention to an aspect of everyday life, such as clocking in to work). However, as our friendship also forms part of our quotidian experience, we shifted focus with *Recipe Book* to consider an autoethnography of friendship, demarcating acts of friendship within performance writing. Our approach brings together distinct methodologies (collaboration, autoethnography and friendship as method) in new ways to produce both the co-authored thesis *and* the performance writing made for this research.

As discussed in the introduction, the research sits within and across three subfields. In addition to performance writing, we analyse this research as belonging to an object-oriented subfield of contemporary art and a subfield of performance concerned with sited score-based performance that may be connected to the pedestrian or walking practices. Bringing these subfields together is a new approach to the making and analysis of performance writing. All of the contributions to knowledge are therefore interconnected but also draw on specifics of the fields. Our use of the writerly as a way to understand how performance writing is read and understood is one example of a field specific contribution.

In terms of object-oriented contemporary art, we offer new insights to the theory and artistic practice of assemblages. We have created artwork that exists as an assemblage; in doing so we have been able to think both about the process of making objects as well as the way that they are constructed and received by reader-audiences. This is connected to our use of the writerly and would be beneficial to those connected to the field who are studying the relationship between writing and objects. A second aspect of new knowledge that is explicitly linked to this field is that our practice is part of what we describe as a 'millennial aesthetic', an understanding that arises from our practice-research. Millennial aesthetic is characterised by millennial artist's use of DIY techniques and found objects, drawing on personal memories and nostalgia. This aesthetic is further demonstrated through artists such as Holly White, Trisha Baga and Tommy Smits.

In relation to the third field of sited score-based performance practice, the thesis contributes precarity as a devising strategy. By this we mean that our experiences of precarity have led us to devise work that is specifically drawn from these experiences, using sited score-based performance to do this. As we identify through the literature review in the introduction, precarity has been used previously as subject matter but not in how the work is devised and produced.

The subfields this thesis belongs to further highlights tensions within performance writing. It is useful for us to consider both objects and sited score-based performance in relation to performance writing, because of the relationship between these subfields and the social, cultural and economic position of millennial precarity. In the introduction, we make reference to a way of using objects as a millennial aesthetic (discussed also above). Whilst the use of such objects is not limited to millennials, we are able to connect this to a way of making objects that uses the circumstances of the precarious millennial, including using DIY techniques, and producing ephemera that has a handmade or found quality. Similarly, we describe score and sited work. An example is the research project *Walking Publics / Walking Arts*, concerned with creative walking, which produced *The Walkbook* (2022). This is an example of a series of sited score-based performance that is designed to foster creative imaginative responses to everyday acts. Sited score-based performance turns focus on to the subject of the score, to consider our relationship to the subject and to consider ways we might respond that are new to us. This characteristic is shared with our autoethnographic collaborative methodology, whereby we use performance writing to consider our relationship to the subject (our experience of precarity in this instance); and of using performance writing as the means of

producing research, which we describe as a means of imagining new potential futures. Again, whilst these are not exclusive to a demographic of precarious millennials, we again incorporate devising processes into our definition of performance writing, and devise scores in such a way that makes use of and interrogates our position.

We consider the three subfields as both distinct and connected. We describe the characteristics of performance writing, which for us (within our practice) *include* score-based performance, site and objects. Therefore, we ask why it is useful for us to understand objects in relation to performance writing, why it is useful for us to understand sited score-based performance in relation to performance writing, and ultimately, why it is useful for us to understand performance writing in relation to the key words in the questions and aims: millennial, precarity (see also response to Question One), friendship, collaboration (addressed above in bringing together friendship, collaboration, and autoethnography) and hope.

We state earlier in this conclusion how the concept of hospitality has aided us in our analyses of friendship and hope in millennial precarity (the third aim of this thesis). In the introduction to the thesis, we refer to scholarly research on hope as it relates to psychology, as a goal-oriented means of self-realisation (Synder, 2002). We also refer to hope as a philosophical concept of utopia, one of allowing a consideration of what might potentially happen in the future to include that which exists outside of what we consider *might* happen (Bloch, 1995). We also refer to hope as holding political power for resistance (Solnit, 2016). The description of hospitality as both

making room for the other as well as being open to being changed by the other (likened also to the friendship and collaborative relationship used in this research) connects to these understandings of hope, specifically Bloch and Solnit. We describe how the process of making performance writing undermines the certainty of the future. As such, performance writing demonstrates its potential to be hopeful through

1) opening up new considerations of what might be possible (whereby creativity offers the means to imagine new realities).

2) through this hope, offering small acts of resistance which we address in the thesis as using pleasure to slow down time as a small act of resistance (see Chapter Four).

3) the relationship between friendship and collaboration as one of considering the other, offering hope for what might be changed through this.

### ***Future Research***

As discussed, we consider performance writing to offer a method of making in response to precarity. Performance writing also offers an emotive or psychological response to precarity, such as how making might be considered soothing and related to wellbeing and the psychology of art making as therapy; and how making is a means to connect with others and form communities. An opportunity to extend this research is to consider the practical applications of responding to precarity with performance writing, using some of the methods we have developed in our work, in combination with the outward looking definition of collaboration utilised by socially engaged practice. This includes connecting with communities including zine communities, craft groups, protest and grassroots groups. As mentioned earlier in

this conclusion, we hope to develop workshops and publication projects using this practice.

As stated throughout this conclusion, we suggest that performance writing might be used to understand and illustrate autoethnographic experience beyond millennial precarity. A future avenue for research is to test how strategies developed in this thesis might apply to other contexts.

## Postscript

In March 2020 the UK went into a national lockdown to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus (also known as SARS-CoV-2, the World Health Organisation gave both these names as official) (World Health Organisation, 2020). The fortnight before the lockdown was particularly scary for us. We were hearing regular horror stories in the news about how it spreads to the lungs, about how there were no hospital beds, how people that required an ambulance were now being told to stay at home instead of going to hospital, about hospital wards being made into Covid wards, about convention centres being made into emergency 'Nightingale' hospitals. Newspapers printed daily death rates. We were scared for our loved ones who had compromised health. On top of this, we were worried that if we went into lockdown, we would be left without an income. Bars, pubs, clubs and restaurants shut a couple days before the lockdown (Stewart and Walker, 2020). Katheryn was at work (in a pub) when the announcement was made, and they continued serving for half an hour before closing the bar and locking all the stock in the cellar, taking all the food from the kitchen and sitting up all night at home with colleagues eating and drinking. The atmosphere at the pub that week had been tense; busier than usual with more drunkenness, drug taking and fighting, as if customers knew what was coming and wanted to get all their socialising and anxiety out of their systems before the pub was off limits. When we found out about the furlough scheme – that would support businesses in retaining workers through wage support providing 80% of workers regular wage – managing our anxiety about financial survival got a little easier. After an initial period of two weeks where staff were instructed not to work but kept on full pay, Chris was told that he was expected to return to work and provide a takeaway service in his hospitality job at a coffee chain. His routines changed, making sure to



walk to and from work to avoid public transport, and at a time when it seemed from the news that people who got the virus inevitably got very very sick, he had to deal with the anxiety of being in public away from the safety of his home just to keep a coffee chain branch (that could afford to close) open. The lockdowns changed the shape of some of this research, and some of the works discussed (*Chapel Street or Wherever You Are*, *The Meal Project* and *Recipe Book*) were all made in lockdown, as discussed in the relevant chapters.

This experience also impacted our understanding of precarity and care. In a timely edition of *e-flux* the writer iLiana Fokianaki states (citizens) ‘are further burdened with individual responsibility for their own care, since care has lost its character as a human right and has become a paid service’ (Fokianaki: 2020). Fokianaki concludes that the emphasis on self-care means individuals’ empathy often extends only to those who they relate to – either through familial bond, or through work, or through shared class positions. Self-care in this sense is a privilege that many cannot access, and it acts as a temporary displacement of feelings. This idea of self-care replaces social care and social responsibility, and it fails to distinguish between genuine ways one may look after oneself, and indulgences that some can access. We’re not arguing against solitary indulgence (such as the slightly misogynistic cliché of doing a facemask, having a bath and a glass of wine, or a solitary run) but that this (and other) ways of relaxing is not synonymous with care, and misuses the term. Actual care would mean all bodies are cared for and nourished in meaningful ways, and ‘time out’ to relax would not be a luxury as an escape from the realities of life, because the realities of life would be approached with care.

The capitalist notion of self-care goes even beyond a selfish type of care to one that often harms others. Written during the pandemic, *e-flux Journal #119* looked at collective bodies in relation to social freedom, and the impact of Covid-19 on this:

On the micro level, isolation has shown that our established practices of self-care are entirely individualistic. Those who could afford to make bread, created Corona-kitchen Facebook groups, took online yoga classes, made jam, and paid insane amounts of money for “loungewear,” new tech, and organic food, all brought to them by delivery workers who pee in bottles so as not to miss their daily target of two hundred deliveries.  
(Fokianaki: 2021).

Here, care is not treated as a human right, but something some give up in the name of keeping things going, so that others can indulge in self-care.

For us, the work we made together during the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns (particularly around eating together) was an act of self-care. Being able to make a project out of eating together reveals our privilege, particularly as we were able to sustain this. We both still had access to money, were able to enjoy the time to cook, and had access to the equipment needed to cook – our day-to-day existence was not threatened by our living situation during the pandemic. We are aware even amongst our friends who share similar levels of privilege that this wasn't the case for everyone and access to financial support was not guaranteed. The anxiety felt in the run up to understanding how we would manage financially during the initial lockdown also highlighted that something taken for granted (food with friends) can quickly be an indulgent luxury. Therefore, making time to collaborate in art together (particularly though eating together, as discussed in Chapters Seven and Nine) became an example of care and friendship, but also revealed what the project was not able to be. For example, queuing at the shop to get ingredients was at times a fun activity;

we appreciated the slower pace of shopping. But we were aware we were able to enjoy this because we did not have to be anywhere other than at home. In fact, choosing to queue at the shop to get ingredients meant putting key workers such as supermarket staff and delivery drivers under more strain, and we could argue that as such focusing on food as a way of connecting with one another was at times selfish. At the same time, it was nice to be able to connect with friends via food in this time – it was a luxury but it was also a way to sooth ourselves, a way to seek joy together, though it did not attempt to change anything. When we discuss our experience of precarity as relative, the pandemic has further complicated the ways in which we experienced both privilege and precarity.

The summer of 2020 was also marked by a series of national and international protests, notably for the Black Lives Matter movement in response to the killing of George Floyd by police officers in America (many protests were held across different sites in the UK, particularly on 31st May 2020), and also Trans Lives Matter protests held to protest the government's response to proposed changes to the gender recognition act (in Manchester this took place on 11th July 2020), and then in March 2021 there were a series of national woman-led vigils and anti-police protests in response to the murder of Sarah Everard by a police officer.

For many, access to these protests would have been limited, as it would further compromise individual's safety, as Judith Butler explains:

As we know, not everyone can take for granted the power to walk on the street or into a bar without harassment. To walk on the street alone without police harassment is precisely not to walk with the company of others and whatever non-police forms of protection that supplies. And yet, when a transgendered person walks on the street in Ankara or into McDonald's in

Baltimore, there is a question of whether that right can be exercised by the individual alone. (2015: 51)

Butler reminds us here again of the position we occupy when we talk about precarity; one where we are able to choose to walk alone if we want to. Furthermore in drawing on the autoethnographic in discussing precarity, we are highlighting here the limits of our research. Our definition of performance writing would perhaps need revising when addressing millennial precarity that sits outside of our own identities. In particular, Butler's work on the right to appear in public highlights the privileged position our use of walking comes from. However, the self care that we were able to exercise through our performance writing we feel still supports an approach to care that isn't about displacement of feelings nor about spending money on 'care' in order to self sooth. The process of making offers us ways to soothe and care for ourselves by, despite often being an insular process, forcing us to reflect on our environments and our role in them, as well as being an imaginative process that isn't about escapism.

We occupy a position in which our existence is not threatened with daily violence, and so we are able to be in public: our right to appear in public is not compromised by our cultural background or gender identity.<sup>71</sup> We also were able to protect our health sufficiently, something the inability to do would further preclude many from being at protests, at the height of the pandemic. This experience further served to highlight the specificity of the experience of precarity we are discussing in this thesis:

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<sup>71</sup> One of us identifies as female and one of us identifies as queer so there are some capacities in which we don't feel safe, however, we live in an urban metropolis near universities and arts centres and in communities where generally we are able to be in public without facing violence due to high numbers of similarly identifying people; and we are protected by other aspects of our identities (such as being white).

one that is predicated on a particular socio-economic position but one in which our existences are not threatened. We make reference to this here in part because these events have been a significant aspect of daily life for the second half of the time we spent on this PhD, and in part because it made us more acutely aware of the ways precarity are not part of our lives, and we wish to be absolutely clear that specifically referring to millennial precarity as it relates to experiences of rented housing and labour practices that rely on zero hour contracts, both of which limit long term security.

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## Appendix A

Owens, K. & Green, C. (2019), 'The Image of The Ghost', *Performance Research*, Volume 24, Number 7, pp 156-160.

### **The Image of The Ghost:**

Ghosting is understood to have a double meaning; firstly as the supernatural, an apparition of the dead. The last ten years hasn't seen a proliferation of ghosts on our screens as it has with other undead figures. Ghosts are the traumatised, unable to move on, stuck in the past and present. A chimaera of dashed hopes, an unattainable future, with nowhere to go.

The second understanding of ghosting is used within contemporary parlance and concerns the practice of ending a relationship, through the screening of calls, messages and withdrawing overall contact with someone, often without the person being made aware of the reasoning behind the action. This is a common and generally accepted experience of dating apps etc, with a sliding scale of the acceptability of ghosting. (Chatted online a bit = fine to ghost. Entered into a sexual relationship under the pretext of dating as opposed to a one night stand = the ghosted is justified in feeling put out by this).

We are all ghosts! - simultaneously the ghosted and the ghoster.

Experiencing the world as a ghost often comes as a by product of living precarious atomised lives. We have intense periods of relationships with people who we would otherwise not have come into contact with. Brought together through the commonality of circumstance, as soon as somebody moves on this dynamic changes, we often lose touch with the people we had shared a house with or spent more time with than friends and family during the working week.

Being ghosted by someone can come as a shock. But, we also know that at times, we have had to be the ghoster. There is a lot of emotional labour in staying in touch; disappearing can happen by accident: a lack of time encourages atomised lives, bringing about feelings of guilt of not being a good enough friend, of not making time. Ghosting may happen through miscommunication and misunderstanding; you forget to reply to someone's message, and then over time they stop responding also. Precarity pushes us further apart: if we are struggling to survive we may struggle to stay connected. These unexpectedly fleeting relationships are moments of appearance and disappearance, that characterise millennial experience. Home, community, family, friends, work - these impermanent uncertain states mean different things to fifty years ago.

Like all experiences of precarity, these economic ghosts exist on a scale. They might be the victims of the impact of capitalism on an international scale - those whose lives are lost as a result of environmental damage, or the exploitation of workers whose lives are lost or cut short through poor working conditions producing goods in countries with substandard labour laws, for countries where such practices are illegal.

There are the ghosts who are victims of the economy that we see everyday but might overlook or don't share the experiences of - living in an infrastructure that contributes to homelessness, the need for foodbanks, lack of access to appropriate medical care.

Then there is the experience of being ghostly, an experience of precarity, but within a world of privilege: the ghosts who are afforded the right to appear. Those who, for now, are housed, fed and clothed, but for whom this isn't a fully tangible experience. Ghosting seems symptomatic of an environment that encourages competition and selfishness over care. We're working towards the hypothesis that friendship and collaboration offers a potential for stability: an attempt to rethink how people might live (together), how we might find mutual support, how we might figure out and practice our politics and compassion.

## **ORDER OF APPEARANCE AND DISAPPEARANCE:**

### 1. Ghosting

I'm dead!: we're all ghosts now.

Think of a time when you have been ghosted.

How did it feel?

Think of a time when you ghosted someone else.

How did it feel?

Think of a time when you performed being a ghost.

How did it feel?

Think of a time when you needed a ghost.

How did it feel?

Think of a time when you wished you were a ghost.

How did it feel?

## **APPEARANCE**

1. Friendship & TV
2. Dating
3. Trauma
4. Labour
5. Hauntology
6. Lost Futures
7. Music
8. Relationships
9. Leisure
10. Housing
11. Hospitality
12. The Living Room

## **DISAPPEARANCE**

## INDEX (OR THINGS THAT HAUNT US / IN WHICH WE ARE GHOSTS):

2.  
The living room

On entering the living room select your seat of choice. Spend some time exploring your seat. Be with it. What does it feel like? How do you observe the room from where you are sat? What areas are out of sight? Why is this your favourite seat?

Count all of the seats left in the room (imaginary or otherwise).

### Dating:

(see also: family, friends, ghosting, lost futures, pop culture, relationships, trauma)

New models for connecting with strangers (apps), designed to make it easier to meet more people but can end up being labour intensive. Hours spent sharing intimacies online with someone you'll not speak to again. Potential for exploring sexuality through anonymity.

### Friendship & TV:

(see also: leisure, the living room, relationships)

*Love Island, Big Little Lies, Russian Doll, Dead to Me*. Noticing an increase in TV shows that are based upon (female) friendships and trauma. Programmes that can be celebrated as progressive and critiqued negatively (for their heteronormativity and/or whitewashing) simultaneously. But we're excited to see characters where we're starting to recognise their interior lives in stories on screen, even if we don't recognise their external realities.

The elevation of friendship over the pursuit of a monogamous partner.

The television we watch is a conversation point between friends (the age of box set TV)

### Hauntology:

(see also: housing, lost futures, trauma)

Theorists: Jacques Derrida, Mark Fisher.

[hauntology] brings together haunting and ontology, to create a disembodied alternative to the branch of metaphysics that deals with the messy business of *being*. Ontology is the interrogation of thingness, a process undertaken in recognition that to be a thing, it is necessary to have been. Thus hauntology allows a way to step into a dialogue with those things that never were.

(Whalley & Miller, 2016: 30)

Contemporary uncertainty is haunted by a history that promised a future that is now unattainable. In *Ghosts of my Life* (2014) Mark Fisher writes about how the impact of changing housing models (away from a social model) has contributed to an environment of cultural conservatism (2014:15), illustrating this through his experience of popular music. He also refers to the relationship between hauntology and the felt effect of trauma as a result of what *has* happened, and as a result *is yet* to happen but exists *in potentia*.

Referring back to Häggblunds distinction between the *no longer* and the *not yet*, we can provisionally distinguish between two directions in hauntology. The first refers to that which is (in actuality is) *no longer*, but which *remains* effective as a virtuality (the traumatic 'compulsion to repeat', a fatal pattern) The second sense of hauntology refers to that which (in actuality) has *not yet* happened, but which is *already* effective in the virtual (an attractor, an anticipation shaping current behaviour).

(Fisher, 2014: 19)

Whilst Fisher mourns for 'the culture that shaped most of my early expectations' (2014: 23), the millennial is stuck in a liminal moment between nostalgia for a past they've been told about, seen on T.V, listened to in music, and anxiety in potentia for a future that no longer promises arrival at a moment of adulthood. The state provided safety net of the past no longer exists - having disappeared on a spectrum that spans using signing on in your twenties as an opportunity to explore creative avenues, to being denied financial support (for example through disability living allowance) at a real human cost. Living with precarity, be that from poverty or insecurity (from precarious jobs or insecure renting) means living in a state of anxiety and exhaustion. These are not conditions that lend themselves to seeing our way out of this haunted moment, to reimagining or creating the future.

## Hospitality:

(see also: dating, friendship & TV, labour, leisure, the living room, lost futures, the means to save, relationships)

Thinking about the relationship between hospitality and hosting. Between the home and employment. In houses where our ability to play host may be compromised: (perhaps through the relationship to the building and the other occupants, see: lodging / house share / the living room) and in relying on employment where we are paid to be hospitable (see emotional labour), to perform as host, to make drinks and serve food, in employment that is at turns useful and convenient, (allowing us to pick up and drop hours depending on our other modes of income), and is also exploitative (lack of breaks, hours cut with no notice). The means to be host in the home is dependant on the relationship to that home. Some houses we've been in, we've entertained guests and each other, we've cooked, cleaned in preparation, put music on, got board games out. Some homes, we've retreated to our bedrooms and left the house to see friends and be sociable, going to pubs and other houses, needing to be hosted.

## Housing:

(see also: friendship & TV, hauntology, hospitality, labour, the living room, lost futures, the means to save, relationships, trauma)

Renting vs ownership, lack of the means to save for a deposit = stuck with insecure, disproportionately expensive renting, despite changes in law still a lack of legislation for renting. Inability to afford living alone; joys and annoyances of shared living. Expense of frequently moving. Rent furnished or lug furniture around on short notice. Lack of access to social housing. Co tenants as strangers, or friends, or family, or housemates.

The benefits of shared housing, when it incorporates sustained friendship, is of having allies in the house with which to deal with the world outside the house; a space to rehearse being in public. The disadvantages are negotiations of labour, space, or needing to seek out other spaces for recovery external to the home when you need reprieve from others, and of the fact that often you might not be friends with one another. In the book *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life* (2010), Brandon Labelle comments on the development of technologies that have resulted in sound from other homes intruding on ones private spaces, bringing 'neighbours into unexpected contact' and 'giving way to new forms of connectivity' (Labelle, 2010: 52). In shared living this resonates on an even more local scale. Whilst it is possible to hear the sounds of neighbours in their private spaces through the use of devices such as a vacuum cleaner, or a hairdryer, or a motorised lawn-mower, or a particularly loud television or music system, in situations that call for renting a house with strangers, 'neighbourhood' sounds come into the home not just from outside but also from within. As people increasingly live in effect with people that might have been neighbours in previous generations, and the sounds that housemates make bleed into one another's spaces. The negotiation of space is physical, emotional, aural.

Friendships develop, to varying degrees, but there is no commitment towards this arrangement. Tenants are not a family. Managing these contradictory states is a form of emotional labour.

Prior to such high rent, to live with others might be regarded as a lifestyle choice. Now, born from necessity, tenants are forced into temporary arrangements, living with others, as configurations of housemates are subject to frequently changing due to how one another's lives differ from each other.

## Labour:

(see also: hospitality, leisure, lost futures, the means to save, trauma)

Insecure contracts, more work less time, over educated, cost of living exceeds wages (high rental costs etc), no balance between work and life, constantly connected to work (mobile phones). This rise in constant connectivity has been associated with 'invisible labour' - defined as 'activities that occur within the context of paid employment that workers perform in response to requirements (either implicit or explicit) from



employers that are crucial for workers to generate income, to retain or obtain their jobs and to further their careers' (Cherry, Crain & Poster 2016:6). This form of labour often goes unrecognised and unvalued. Accompanying this is an increase in immaterial and emotional labour.

## Leisure:

(see also: friendship & TV shows, the living room, the means to save)

No time, must be cheap, restricted to those who have the money, seems a luxury. Treating labour as a form of leisure, overworking for free. Stealing moments. Monetisation of leisure. Be productive. Work out. Make the most of your time. Guilt of doing nothing. Doing nothing is consuming, is watching TV.

## The Living Room: trauma)

(see also: friendship & TV shows, housing, hospitality, leisure, lost futures, relationships,

The home as a projected stable site, as a coordination and organisation of the flows and ruptures inherent to everyday life, to the destabilized core of the self, expresses interiority by becoming an intimate reflection of life and its private rituals. The home is an emotional space balanced on orderly refinement, from the chair one sits in every evening to the favourite cup

(Labelle, 2010: 49-50).

The living room is something else in shared housing. A public space in a private building. The joy of finding you live with people where you can still be yourself in the living room; a celebration of communality. Or an avoidant space, where your bedroom becomes your sleeping space, your social entertaining space, your living room, your study, your hideaway. Landlords who swap out the living room for another bedroom, more money, in these situations the sense of community often disappears. Stunted adolescence. The house as a leisure space, as a sanctuary, changes.

## Lost Futures:

(see also: friendship & TV shows, hauntology, leisure, the living room, the means to save, music, relationships, trauma)

Theorists = Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, Lauren Berlant, Mark Fisher

What haunts the digital cul-de-sacs of the twentieth-first century is not so much the past as all the futures the twentieth century taught us to anticipate... More broadly, and more troublingly, the disappearance of the future meant the disappearance of a whole mode of social imagination: the capacity to conceive of a world radically different from the one in which we currently live.

(Fisher, 2012: 16).

How to navigate a future we don't recognise. Family, the idea of a home, saving, Brexit, theresa mayhem, the environment, the destruction of the planet. We like that things aren't how they used to be (the expectation to get married and have children), but we aren't sure what our alternative paths will end up looking like (we are stuck in a moment and unable to imagine new models). We know we want to make more 'progress' (what is progress??), but it is hard to do when we are struggling to make ends meet - and we are the lucky ones.

## Music:

(see also: friendship & TV, hauntology, leisure, the living room, relationships)

Mark Fisher uses music as a means to describe our current condition of being stuck in a moment where we are simultaneously moving forward but unable to create anything new. He writes extensively of contemporary music as a nostalgic moment, sounding like it came from a previous era.

For us, music offers an extension of friendship. We text each other motivational songs to help us with our PhD's, or our jobs, or getting out of bed. The iphone replacing the home-compiled mixtape.

## Relationships:

(see also: dating, friendship & family, housing, leisure, lost futures, music)

Cohabitative experiences

Collaborative experiences

Independence // financial vulnerability

Relationship to state - unable to rely / fall back on / learn within safety of the state. Consequences in relation to vulnerability, care, getting sick, opportunity to experience and fail and learn, to have the means to look after oneself

Friendship as care. Friendship as practicing, of figuring things out. Friendship as political selves. How might we care for one another as we get older / if we don't have families.

## Trauma:

(see also: hauntology, lost futures)

Theorists: Sara Ahmed, Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler.

Stuck in a moment of repetition

Not seeing a way through it

Doubt

Connection to tv shows exploring this theme

In Potentia

Although we have not experienced the traumatic event of (for example) being made homeless, we still carry this around with us within our bodies; the potential for this to happen is felt as an outcome of precarity. This sense of possibility is also connected to anxiety, in particular as it relates to temporary and fixed term employment contracts, unstable systems of education, not knowing what will happen in regards to Brexit, on-going risk of harm from sexuality or gender based violence. This is also felt on a much broader world scale; the rise of the far right, the destruction of climate and the growing attacks on individual freedom and choice.

The more precarious you are, the more support you need. The more precarious you are, the less support you have. When we say something is precarious we usually mean it is in a precarious position: if the vase on the mantelpiece were pushed, just a little bit, a little bit, it would topple right over. That position-of living on the edge-is generalized when we speak of precarious populations (see Butler 2015). Living on the edge: a life lived as a fragile thread that keeps unravelling.

(Ahmed, 2017:238)

I left the house in which I currently rent a room (my landlord recently informed me that the house was now up for sale, meaning I will need to move within weeks). Carrying the project we are currently working on - a knitted banner that outlines our desired labour conditions within our zero hour contract jobs, a ball of wool fell out the bag unnoticed. I walked down the high street, crossed two roads, before feeling a tug, someone a few hundred feet away at the end of a orange trail rapidly winding wool back into a ball. The trail stretched across the road, confusing traffic, people watching on. In my own world, headphones on, I had not noticed what i was leaving behind.



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## Appendix B

Owens, K. & Green, C. (2022) 'Walks for When You Need a Friend', *The Walkbook: Recipes for Walking & Wellbeing*. Available at: <https://walkcreate.gla.ac.uk/the-walkbook>

### Walks for when you need a friend

Basic method:

1. Work out the distance between you and a friend. They might live in another country, or city, or street. You can do this on google maps, or by googling 'how many miles between (your location) and (your friends location)'. It doesn't need to be accurate, you don't need a specific route. If your friend also wants to walk, work out what half the distance between you is.
2. Go on a walk: walk a little from / in your home. You don't need to go outside. You could zoom in on a map somewhere you haven't been before (or somewhere you know and are fond of), and follow the lines, exploring your route this way. You could walk the streets immediately outside your home. You can walk as far as you like. On your walk, think of what you notice that you would tell your friend about. Think about what they might enjoy about your walk and why. Maybe you tell your friend.
3. When you have finished walking, note down how far you have walked. Guessing is fine, or you could use a steps app. Or you might want to measure distance in a different way that is personal to you and your friend. (For example, maybe every dog you see being walked counts as one mile walked).
4. Repeat the exercise another day. You might want to take the same route, you might want to take a different route, only walking down roads you haven't used before on your friendship walks.
5. Repeat the walks, marking down the distance covered, until the distance you have walked is the distance between you and your friend. If you and a friend are 'walking towards' each other, maybe you celebrate when you 'meet'. Maybe you walk to where your friend is. Or you could post your friend souvenirs from your walks.

Ways to adapt this walk:

1. You can make this walk as elaborate or as simple as you like. You can walk for miles and hours or you can walk for a few minutes. You can do this walk without leaving your room.
2. You might want to document your walk, maybe on a map, or in a diary, or through photos or drawings. Or you might not want to document it at all.
3. You can do this walk *with* others who you are separated from (you can walk towards each other), or you can do this walk alone, privately, walking towards someone you love.

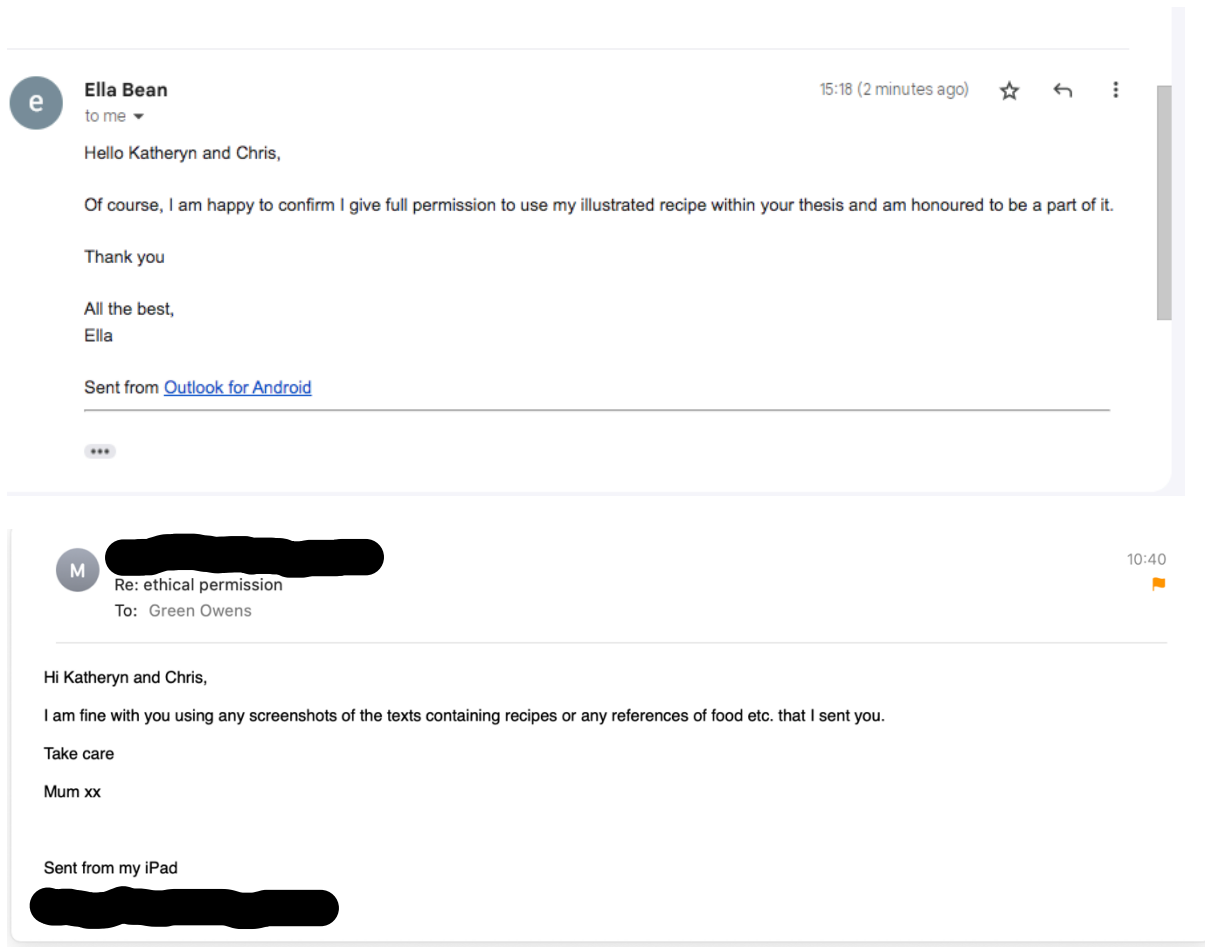
## Appendix C

These screenshots of emails confirm the inclusion of the illustration by Ella Bean and the text messages by Susan Owens was with the approval and knowledge of both.

Ella's work appears as Figure 7.4 on page 259 and in *Recipe Book*.

Susan's texts appear as Figure 7.5 on page 260 and in *Recipe Book*.

These emails are included in support of the Statement of Ethics, on page 50.



## Appendix D

### Recipe Book Reference List

#### **Meal One (14<sup>th</sup> January 2020)**

*Meal One is reprinted in this written thesis and the Recipe Book.*

Pizza Dough: Franco, S. (no date) *Pizza Dough* [Online] Available at <[https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/pizzadoughbase\\_70980](https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/pizzadoughbase_70980)> [Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020].

Pizza Sauce: Clark, E. (no date) *Pizza Sauce* [Online] Available at <<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/pizza-sauce>> [Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020].

#### **Meal Two (2<sup>nd</sup> February 2020)**

*Meal Two appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Stuffed Aubergines: Carlin, A (2014) *Keep it Vegan: 100 simple, healthy and delicious dishes*. London: Kyle Books. pp 89.

Garlic Mash: own recipe.

Chili and Ginger Broccoli: own recipe.

#### **Meal Three (12<sup>th</sup> February 2020).**

*Meal Three appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Pesto Pasta: own recipe

#### **Meal Four (19<sup>th</sup> February 2020)**

*Meal Four is reprinted in this written thesis and the Recipe Book.*

Garlic Mushrooms: own recipe, however the recipe has also been published in the following:

greenandowens (2021) 'Creamy Garlic Mushrooms' in Kivland, S. (ed.) *Recipes Under Confinement*. London: MA Bibliothèque. pp 81-82.

#### **Meal Five (19<sup>th</sup> March 2020)**

*Meal Five appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Baked Potato and salad: own recipe

Bangers and Mash: own recipe.

### **Meal Six (28<sup>th</sup> March 2020)**

*Meal Six appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Chickpea and Spinach Curry: adapted from a handed down recipe, shared and adapted amongst housemates. We have tried to find the original source but so many details have changed this has not been possible. However, many similar recipes exist online (but are dated too recently to be the original version of this recipe). We have kept this recipe in because we have adapted the recipe over time to the extent that the original source is not identifiable, and the collaborative nature of cooking and recipe making in this instance we felt is appropriate for the themes of this thesis.

### **Meal Seven (15<sup>th</sup> April 2020)**

*Meal Two appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Spaghetti and Meatballs: own recipe

### **Meal Eight (26<sup>th</sup> April 2020)**

*Meal Seven appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Garlic Mushrooms: (see Meal Four)

### **Meal Nine and Ten (May Experiment)**

*Meal Nine and Ten appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Spiced Cauliflower with Raita: *Slimming Worlds Free Food A-Z* (2020) Derbyshire: Slimming World. Pp 29.

Vegan Cannelloni: Recipe attributed to Ella Bean and gifted with permission

Bean, E. (2020) *Vegan Sweet Potato and Spinach Cannelloni* [Digital Illustration] [Privately gifted and printed with permission in Recipe Book which is submitted as part of this thesis].

### **Meal Eleven (18<sup>th</sup> June 2020)**

*Meal Eleven is reprinted in this written thesis and the Recipe Book.*

Red Rice: adapted from the recipe 'Red Rice with Feta and Coriander'

Ottolenghi, Y (2020) *Yotam Ottolenghi's favourite rice recipes* 6.06.2020 [Online]. Available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/food/2020/jun/06/yotam-ottolenghi-favourite-rice-recipes-fried-rice-feta-kofte-meatballs>> Accessed 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

### **Meal Twelve (30<sup>th</sup> June 2020)**



*Meal Twelve appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Brunch: own recipe

### **Meal Thirteen (15<sup>th</sup> July 2020)**

*Meal Two appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Caponata Style Aubergines with Olives, Capers and Tomatoes: Iyer, R (2018) *The Green Roasting Tin, Vegan and Vegetarian One Dish Dinners*. London: Square Peg. pp 114-115.

Roasted Tomato, Red Pepper and Artichoke Panzanella with Tarragon and Lemon: Iyer, R (2018) *The Green Roasting Tin, Vegan and Vegetarian One Dish Dinners*. London: Square Peg. pp 60-61.

### **Meal Fourteen (30<sup>th</sup> July 2020)**

*Meal Fourteen appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Roasted Cauliflower with Tahini Dressing: Iyer, R (2018) *The Green Roasting Tin, Vegan and Vegetarian One Dish Dinners*. London: Square Peg. pp 72-73.

### **Meal Fifteen (6<sup>th</sup> August 2020)**

*Meal Fifteen is reprinted in this written thesis and the Recipe Book.*

White Bean Wafers: Lepard, D (2011) *The Handmade Loaf*, London: Mitchell Beazley pp 184.

Smashed Aubergine: Daswon, A (2013) 'Smashed Aubergine' *Waitrose Kitchen Magazine*, August 2013, pp 14.

Vegan 'Feta' and Spinach Spanakopita: Desantis, S. (2018) *World's Best Greek Vegan Spanakopita* 16.12.2018 [Online] Available at <<https://www.veggiesdontbite.com/worlds-best-greek-vegan-spanakopita/>> [Accessed 6<sup>th</sup> August 2020]

Vegan Chocolate Birthday Cake: Turnbull, S. (2015) *The Ultimate Vegan Chocolate Cake* 21.11.2015 [Online]. Available at <<https://itdoesnttastelikechicken.com/the-ultimate-vegan-chocolate-cake/>> [Accessed 6<sup>th</sup> August 2020].

### **Meal Sixteen (11<sup>th</sup> September 2020)**

*Meal Sixteen appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Fake Chicken Burger Butties: own recipe

### **Meal Seventeen (Same date as 16<sup>th</sup> Meal 2020)**

*Meal Seventeen appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Chippy Tea: Bought from the local chip shop.

### **Meal Eighteen (17<sup>th</sup> September 2020)**

*Meal Eighteen appears in the Recipe Book only.*

See Meal Thirteen for Caponata Aubergines

### **Meal Nineteen (14<sup>th</sup> October 2020)**

*Meal Nineteen appears in the Recipe Book only.*

American Style Pancakes: Pattison, J. (no date) *Vegan Pancakes*. [Online].

Available at

<[https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/vegan\\_american\\_pancakes\\_76094](https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/vegan_american_pancakes_76094)> [Accessed 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020].

### **Meal Twenty (1<sup>st</sup> November 2020)**

*Meal Twenty appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Brunch: own recipe

### **Meal Twenty-One (11<sup>th</sup> November 2020)**

*Meal Twenty-One appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Chickpea Curry: Bush, A. (updated 2022) *Spinach, Chickpea and Potato Curry* [Online]. Available at <<https://www.olivemagazine.com/recipes/vegan/spinach-chickpea-potato-curry/>> [Accessed 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020].

### **Meal Twenty-Two (12<sup>th</sup> November 2020)**

*Meal Twenty-Two appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Green Soup: Nice, M (no date) *Easy Green Vegetable Soup* [Online]. Available at <<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/easy-green-vegetable-soup>> [Accessed 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020].

### **Meal Twenty-Three (26<sup>th</sup> November 2020)**

*Meal Twenty-Three appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Vegan Coq Au Vin: Boehme, L (no date) *Vegan Coq Au Vin* [Online]. Available at <<https://www.rabbitandwolves.com/vegan-coq-au-vin/>> [Accessed 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020]

### **Meal Twenty-Four (16<sup>th</sup> December 2020)**

*Meal Twenty-Four appears in the Recipe Book only.*

Sausage Casserole: own recipe

**Meal Twenty-Five (22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020)**

*Meal Twenty-Five is reprinted in this written thesis and the Recipe Book.*

Vegan kebabs: bought from Doner Summer Kebabs in Manchester.